Cloud Storage Isn’t As Safe As You Think. Here’s How to Avoid a Costly Data Disaster.

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Key Takeaways

- Storing data in the cloud does not automatically make it safe. The infrastructure is physical and vulnerable to attacks, failures and human error.
- Cloud providers manage the infrastructure’s security, but customers are responsible for protecting their own data within that infrastructure through backups, recovery tools, encryption, etc.
- Companies must also enforce strict access management and conduct regular audits and inspections.

One of the biggest misconceptions about cloud storage is that if your data is in the “cloud,” it’s safe. Unfortunately, that is not how data security works. A cloud server is not something in the sky that is intangible.

Cloud infrastructure is built on actual servers, physical data storage devices and other hardware components that are as susceptible to attacks and failures.

Therefore, while cloud service providers build and manage the infrastructure, the responsibility for data security, integrity and recovery is not solely on them (read their terms and conditions, and you will be surprised).

Related: Is My Data Really Safe? Your Questions About Cloud-Based Storage, Answered.

Cloud does not always mean automatic safety

Some of the largest cloud providers build their solutions around reliability, ensuring uptime is as close to 100% as possible and making sure their hardware is up to date and fit for purpose.

While GDPR compliance and data protection laws put some pressure on cloud service providers to safeguard your data, recent events have confirmed that this is not enough.

As recently as July 2025, Microsoft servers were attacked, and earlier in the year, Oracle's cloud servers were hacked twice, which led to healthcare information of more than 14,000 people being stolen. Both Microsoft and Oracle claim to have the most robust cloud services with a clientele that includes the world's large corporations and even government agencies.

Global education giant Pearson suffered from a cyberattack, which led to the loss of terabytes of data from their AWS and Google Cloud. Both of these are the largest and the third largest providers of cloud services in the world, respectively.

With so many incidents taking place at such frequency, we have to dispel the myth that simply because your data is on the cloud, you have automatic backups and recovery.

We need to think about shared responsibility and take some direct measures to protect our cloud data.

Threats to cloud data

Threats to cloud data can come in a number of ways. Simple human error plays a huge part; in fact, some studies suggest that human error alone accounts for over 88% of all data breaches, accidental deletions and lost data, making it essential for all companies to have some kind of data recovery tools.

The internet is also full of ransomware and malware that creeps into synced cloud storage and not only attacks main servers, but also spreads to other networks.

According to one study, ransomware attacks cause $57 billion of damage every year.

Ultimately, many companies have lost data simply by choosing an unreliable cloud service provider or have become victims of "revenge attacks" from estranged employees.

Related: Is Your Company's Data Safe in the Cloud? (Infographic)

Your responsibility to protect your own cloud data

1. Understand the shared responsibility model

Start by making sure you work with a reliable cloud provider and become familiar with their shared responsibility model. A shared responsibility model is a cybersecurity framework that establishes who is responsible for different aspects of a cloud computing infrastructure.

The responsibilities are shared between a provider and a customer, and understanding them is important. In a nutshell, this is what it looks like:

Provider's role: Build and manage cloud infrastructure, protect the hardware, and ensure uptimes for customers. This can encompass a lot of other activities, including network maintenance, configuration settings, etc.

Customer's role: Build your own data backups, use and test data recovery tools, use encryption, etc.

All large cloud providers, including Google and AWS, have shared responsibility models as part of their agreements.

2. Data governance

Customers are responsible for their own data governance – a framework that sets the policies and standards for organizations to manage their data as a strategic asset. This basically encompasses an internal set of rules that establishes how data is gathered, stored, secured and disposed of.

While data governance is built around a basic model, every organization manages its data slightly differently depending on the kind of data they have, its importance and the company's overall IT budget.

3. Data encryption

Encrypting sensitive information before uploading it to the cloud is one of the best methods to protect your data. By using either end-to-end encryption tools or client-side encryption, your sensitive data is scrambled and turned into unreadable strings that can only be recovered with a safe key.

This added layer of security is powerful, so much so that if your cloud provider's servers are hacked and your data stolen, it can never be used or be readable to a hacker.

4. Access management against human errors

One of the easiest ways to protect your data is to limit human

error and apply strict access controls. This will include taking several measures, starting by ensuring multi-factor authentication for all kinds of access to ensure ID verification.

Work on role-based access controls, which limit the number of people who have access to specific data, based on their job description. This also allows the possibility of tracking data management under each role, adding an extra layer of scrutiny. This small fix alone might save you tons of money and time.

5. Audits and inspections

Like any other aspect of business operations, it’s important to conduct regular audits and inspections to ensure your cybersecurity is up to date.

This includes testing your backup systems, data recovery tools, and developing and evaluating crisis strategies.

All of this is done to ensure your organization is prepared, your data is protected and you are able to minimize risks and leaks.

According to a recent study by CrowdStrike, attacks on cloud data have increased by 75% in just one year.

Related: Why CEOs Should Absolutely Concern Themselves With Cloud Security

At the same time, for most businesses, the importance of cloud computing has only increased. For some corporations, cloud computing can cost up to 5% of their revenue, while for startup SaaS companies, it can be as high as 90%.

Therefore, financing a bit more to make sure this essential business component is secure, recoverable and safe is the best investment that you can make.

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Why AI Search Will Soon

Decide If Customers Ever Find Your Brand

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Key Takeaways

- AI assistants now deliver product recommendations, collapsing the traditional marketing funnel into answers.
- Optimizing content with schema, clear product attributes and FAQs increases AI recommendation chances.
- Third-party validation through reviews and media mentions builds digital trust that AI relies on.

If the last few years were about business efficiency and retention, 2025 is shaping up differently. Consumer spending is coming back. Customers are finally opening their wallets again, and that means competition for attention is heating up. For founders and brand leaders, the challenge is not just how to keep existing customers engaged but how to make sure new ones can easily find you in the first place.

Here is the shift that too many entrepreneurs still underestimate: most customers are not discovering brands through Google the way they used to. They are now asking Large Language Models (LLMs) and other AI tools. ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude and Gemini are quickly becoming the front door to commerce, which has completely changed the growth playbook.

Across categories, brands that align with this shift are seeing sharp gains in AI-referred traffic, including triple-

digit increases in some segments and more than 400% growth in parts of the luxury sector.

Related: **How Global Companies are Leveraging AI Strategies**

Why search is turning conversational

The core concept of product discovery has gone through an extensive change, from simply searching keywords to typing dynamic conversation. Five years ago, most users typed in "best running shoes in Google."

Now, with LLMs and AI tools, those queries have turned to more descriptive searches, such as "What are the best lightweight running shoes for flat feet under $150?" In just seconds, these tools operate like seasoned researchers that expertly synthesize product specifications, reviews and media mentions to provide definitive, curated recommendations.

For consumers, this instant, hyper-personalized recommendation is a massive win. For brands, however, this raises the stakes to an entirely new level. As the traditional marketing funnel is starting to collapse, if your product isn't in that AI-generated answer, you're essentially being eliminated from the consideration set. In this new landscape, you are either the answer or you are invisible.

Related: **Stop Building a Business That Traps You and Start Climbing the 5 Levels to Financial Freedom**

How AI decides which products to recommend

Think of AI discovery today as the Wild West of early Search Engine Optimization (SEO). The regulations are still being developed, but the fundamental ideas are already forming.

Unlike typical search engines, which rank a list of sites, LLMs and other AI tools come up with a single, confident response from sources that are easy to comprehend and trust. And every business's goal is no longer simply to rank but to make every product's information the most reliable, easy-to-use element for the AI's final recommendation.

This starts with the technical basics. Clean HTML structure, clear headers and descriptive alt text make the content legible to these machines. Highly specific product attributes, such as materials, fit, sizing and use case, will further enable the model to map a user's needs without guesswork. Finally, concise answers to consumers' FAQs can provide perfect, prepackaged building blocks that an AI assistant can confidently copy and cite in its answer, which in turn can make your product an easy choice.

Optimizing your website for AI search

Seventy to eighty percent of AI discovery overlaps with traditional SEO, and most teams already have the resources. The most critical next step is to apply them with an answer-first lens. Development teams can utilize schema markup to enable AI and LLMs to parse content more efficiently. Marketing teams can tailor product descriptions to mirror what customers actually search for online.

For example, if people are looking for "the best moisturizer for sensitive skin that will not clog pores," your product page should answer that question in the first two sentences of the product description. When your content is structured this way, you are essentially writing the AI's answer for it. Additionally, you make your product the most logical and defensible choice.

Getting your brand into the sources AI trusts

While fully optimizing your website is a huge plus, LLMs and AI tools often pull results from third-party sources. Communities like Reddit, category-specific publications and mainstream media all contribute to shaping this knowledge base. In PR, this strategy is referred to as “media mentions.”

Each credible mention is a signal that your product fits a use case, budget or buyer profile. Pitch the outlets your customer already trusts with clear, attribute-led positioning. An AI builds confidence through third-party validation; it looks for a consensus across the web to verify your claims. Your goal is to create this consensus.

To do that, encourage customer reviews that are rich with detail to describe the specific use cases that other buyers care about. Simultaneously, earn placement in authentic comparison articles where conversations about your product category are already happening.

When an AI sees the same specific benefit supported across your site, customer reviews and a trusted third-party article, its confidence in recommending you skyrockets.

Ultimately, the shift from search engine to answer engine is rewriting the playbook for brand discovery. The new strategy is to build a foundation of digital trust so clear and consistent that an AI or an LLM has no choice but to see your brand as the most credible solution.

This doesn’t just encompass the next evolution of SEO; it’s a fundamental return to clarity, authority and value.

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Why Saying ‘Yes’ Is Your Best Career Move in the Age of AI

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Key Takeaways

- Saying yes to challenges builds momentum, visibility and lasting growth.
- Proactive curiosity and initiative are key to standing out professionally.
- Embracing AI and change is essential to staying relevant today.

The biggest opportunities rarely look like opportunities at all — they often show up as inconvenient or uncomfortable, making them tempting to turn down. But saying yes in those moments can change the entire course of your career.

I learned this firsthand years ago, when an urgent customer issue at our company required immediate travel to Spain. One by one, the more senior, logical choices all said no. I wasn’t the obvious candidate, but someone needed to step up. That yes became a turning point: it showed me that even without all the answers, you can figure things out. It also opened doors to opportunities I wouldn’t have had otherwise.

As the CEO of that company now, it’s a lesson I’ve continued to embrace and share with others: saying yes is one of the fastest ways to grow — helping you stand out, build momentum and stay relevant. And today, that imperative has never been greater.

As AI reshapes the workforce, the pace of change is accelerating beyond what traditional career playbooks can keep up with. Skills in AI-exposed roles are changing 66% faster than in other jobs, while the 'half-life' of many skills has dropped to under five years. That means much of what you know today may already be outdated.

In this environment, a willingness to take on new opportunities and build your skillset has become essential. Whether you're leading a company or just starting out, here's why saying yes is the growth enabler your career needs.

Related: Why Saying Yes Is a Skill — And It'll Change Your Life

Saying yes helps you differentiate

In a competitive job market, standing out is essential. But that doesn't stop after you land the role. Advancement comes from continuing to find ways to shine. Research shows people who are proactive at work are more satisfied with their careers and more likely to be promoted.

Early on, this proactivity can come from curiosity and context-building. If trips or promotions aren't available, take the initiative to find a mentor or learn through conversations with peers about how they're getting ahead.

One of the best ways to set yourself apart is something that most people surprisingly go their whole careers never doing: ask your boss, *"What's your biggest challenge right now? What's keeping you up at night?"* This can yield powerful insights into what's relevant at the next level and create an opening to help solve problems that truly matter.

One of my favorite passages is part of a Carl Holmes essay, highlighting the words: "…and then some." I keep it by my desk as a reminder that differentiation often happens at the

margins. The people who say yes to going a little further — who deliver context along with analysis, who anticipate needs instead of just reacting — get remembered. Those extra steps are what make you the go-to person when opportunities arise. Even if the payoff isn't immediate, the reputational capital and relationships you build can open doors down the road.

Saying yes builds momentum

The best careers aren't built on a single yes — they grow over time like dividends, compounding with every opportunity you take on.

By the time you hit mid-career, leveling up is about maintaining steady progress, even in the face of personal obligations. Ultimately, you own your career, and it's up to you to advance it.

For me, that turning point came when an international development role opened up. Taking it would mean being gone 50–70% of the time, often missing important moments at home. It was a fork in the road: stay on the finance track, or broaden my prospects. I chose the latter. The reward? Cultural fluency, market understanding and leadership experience I never could have gained from a spreadsheet. That yes also set me up for an executive role down the line.

But even when you're seemingly "at the top", growth comes from continuing to stay open and curious. Case in point: after I became CEO, many colleagues urged me to join YPO, a global network for executives. For years, I resisted — insisting I was too busy. When I finally said yes, I realized I should have joined years earlier. The experience gave me access to a trusted peer group, fresh perspectives on my own business and above all, the chance to support others.

After all, as a leader, it's important to remember that saying yes isn't just about your career. Empowering others by

creating stretch opportunities, supporting experiments and amplifying wins is equally important. Not only does this help increase employee engagement, it also amplifies momentum across your team.

Saying yes ensures ongoing relevance

Today, there is no greater catalyst for saying yes than AI. In fact, those hesitating to embrace it risk rapidly losing ground. Nvidia's CEO warned that while AI may not take your job, someone who uses it will.

At my company we've been leveraging AI within our entertainment technology for years. But like many others, we're now exploring how to implement newer AI tools and capabilities across our operations. That's why when a team member recently came forward with a promising solution they had developed as a side project, I applauded their initiative, encouraged them to share it with our AI leads, and asked how we could make it visible to others. That small yes turned into a growth opportunity for them and the entire organization.

It also reinforced a larger truth: saying yes to AI isn't just about learning a new tool. It's about building the judgment and expertise needed to use and implement it responsibly. After all, AI's well-documented hallucinations require not only fact checking, but discerning assessment backed by real-world experience and deep domain knowledge – the very kind you build from years of saying yes to new challenges and opportunities.

While playing it safe may be tempting, now more than ever standing still equates to decline. George Land's book *Grow or Die* puts it bluntly: you're either advancing or you're falling behind. In the end, it's simple: say yes, keep moving and the rewards will follow.

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A Data Breach Reportedly Affecting 18 Million Customers Hits Jeep, Chrysler, and Dodge Parent Company

A major automaker just experienced a data breach that could affect tens of millions of customers.

Stellantis, the carmaker behind Jeep, Fiat, Chrysler, and Dodge, stated on Sunday in a press release that it "recently" uncovered "unauthorized access" to a third-party service platform part of its customer service operations in North America.

"We are also notifying the appropriate authorities and directly informing affected customers," Stellantis wrote in the press release. The release notes that while contact information was exposed, financial information was not. The statement did not specify the types of contact information affected.

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Cyberattack, Costing the Company More than a Billion So Far

Stellantis, which was created in 2021 following the merger of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles and PSA Group, is the world’s fifth-largest automaker by sales volume.

The car company did not reveal the number of people impacted by the breach. However, the ShinyHunters cybercriminal group claimed responsibility for the attack and told tech site BleepingComputer on Monday that it had stolen more than 18 million Salesforce records from Stellantis, including names and contact information.

A 2025 Stellantis Jeep Wrangler, a 2025 Stellantis Ram 1500, and a 2025 Stellantis Jeep Grand Wagoneer.

Photographer: Kent Nishimura/Bloomberg via Getty Images

ShinyHunters has been going after high-profile Salesforce customers since the beginning of the year by using voice phishing attacks to steal data. Google confirmed in June that ShinyHunters was responsible for a data breach affecting one of its own Salesforce databases that contained information about small and medium-sized businesses.

Related: ‘Largest Data Breach in History’: Apple, Google, and Meta Passwords Reportedly Among 16 Billion Stolen in Massive Hack

Louis Vuitton and insurance company Allianz Life also experienced data breaches in July that were linked to the ShinyHunters group.

According to the National CIO Review, ShinyHunters employs a consistent attack strategy: Someone calls a company employee pretending to be IT support and has them download an app, which grants the attacker access to customer data. The attacker then steals information like names, emails, and phone numbers, and demands ransom payments from the company to stop the publication of the data.

ShinyHunters told BleepingComputer that it had stolen over 1.5 billion Salesforce records from 760 companies in total so far.

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A Major Airline Is Furloughing One-Third of Its Flight Attendants

Spirit Airlines is set to furlough 1,800 flight attendants, according to a memo sent to staff from John Bendoraitis, Spirit's chief operating officer, on Monday.

"As we work to return Spirit to profitability, we face difficult decisions about our network, our fleet, and ultimately our workforce," the memo said, per *The Wall Street Journal.* "We need to shift our focus to a complete rightsizing of the airline, which means volume-based adjustments to our Flight Attendant group, and across our teams. This is hard news, and we understand it affects not only you and your peers but also your families."

Last week, Spirit CEO Dave Davis warned staff that job cuts were imminent after the company filed its second bankruptcy in less than a year in late August. The cuts announced on Monday will impact one-third of the company's total cabin crew members.

Related: Workers Taking Mental Health Leaves Have Increased By 300% Since 2019, According to a New Study

Travelers at a Spirit Airlines bag drop at LaGuardia Airport (LGA) in the Queens borough of New York, US, on Tuesday, Aug. 19, 2025. Michael Nagle/Bloomberg via Getty Images

The current, voluntary furloughs can be selected for six or 12 months, and those who choose the leave will keep medical benefits while out, according to a note sent by the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA (AFA) union to its members and seen by CNBC.

Bendoraitis said that about 800 flight attendants are already on leave, but there is a “limit to how many people can volunteer.” Hundreds of pilots have already been furloughed.

Involuntary furloughs will begin on Dec. 1, the union said.

Earlier this month, Spirit announced that it was ending service to a dozen cities in October, and rival airlines are already swooping in. Frontier Airlines, for example, which has a 35% overlap with Spirit on routes, per CNBC, said it would be adding 20 new routes.

“If Spirit suddenly goes out of business, it will be incredibly disruptive, so we’re adding these flights to give their customers other options if they want or need them,” said Patrick Quayle, United’s senior vice president of global network planning and alliances, in a press release at the time.

Related: Spirit Airlines Issues New Dress Code After Last Year’s Viral Crop Top Incident

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A 27-Year-Old Toy Company Is Growing Faster Than Microsoft: 'Really Emotional, Memorable Experience'

Nvidia may be the most valuable company in the world, surging to a record-high $4.395 trillion market capitalization over the past few months, but when it comes to stock growth, one surprising company has it beat: Build-A-Bear Workshop.

Build-A-Bear's stock grew by more than 2,000% over the past five years, making it one of the top 20 companies in the world by share growth, per *The Washington Post*. Company shares are up over 60% year-to-date at the time of writing. According to Build-A-Bear's earnings report for the second quarter ending August 2, total revenue hit $124.2 million, an 11% increase from the same period last year. It was the company's most profitable second quarter in its history.

Build-A-Bear's stock growth beats the world's biggest tech giants, such as Nvidia (surged by over 1,300% in the past five years, with shares up over 30% year-to-date); Microsoft (stock grew by 147% across the past five years); and Oracle (stock swelled 444% across the same time period).

Related: How Labubu Outsold Barbie and Hot Wheels — and Will

Help Parent Company Pop Mart Earn $4 Billion This Year

At Build-A-Bear, customers stuff a plush toy, add a toy heart, and dress the stuffed animal. The company was founded in October 1997 in Saint Louis, Missouri, and the experience in stores has remained consistent since its founding.

The company’s CEO, Sharon Price John, who took over in 2013, told CNBC that the process of making a bear is “a really emotional, memorable experience that creates a tremendous amount of equity.” The store’s in-person experience contributes to its resilience, even as other mall stores like Claire’s close hundreds of locations.

Build-A-Bear Workshop in Denver, Colorado. Photo by Joe Amon/The Denver Post via Getty Images

“Those strong feelings that consumers have for brands are very stretchable beyond just that one experience,” John told the outlet.

University of Pennsylvania Marketing Professor Americus Reed told CNBC that the “ritualistic” process of creating a stuffed animal at Build-A-Bear creates a memorable experience that is “really hard to replicate.” Build-A-Bear creates a deeper connection with its customers, building a sense of loyalty, Reed explained.

Related: The Lego Resale Market Is Reportedly Thriving — And Some Sets Can Fetch Over $15,000

Zach Wray, a customer whose family has hundreds of bears, told *The Washington Post* that the experience of creating a stuffed animal is what keeps his kids coming back to Build-A-Bear.

“They make it really special for the kids,” Wray told the outlet.

Nostalgia also plays a role in the company’s growth. A recent survey released by Build-A-Bear earlier this month shows that 92% of adults still have their childhood stuffed animal, and nearly 100% say that teddy bears are for all ages. Two-fifths (40%) of Build-A-Bear’s customers are adults, not kids, according to *The Washington Post*.

Build-A-Bear has 627 stores across 32 countries, 100 of which opened within the past two years. The company told *The Washington Post* that it plans to open 60 more locations this year, and that almost all of its stores in North America were profitable.

Related: This Mom’s Side Hustle Selling a $600 Children’s Toy Became a Business Making Over $1 Million a Year: ‘There Is a Lot to Love’

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Half of Gen X Has Financial 'Blind Spot' That Wrecks Retirement

As the oldest members of Gen X continue to turn 60 this year, the so-called “sandwich generation” is getting closer to the typical age for retirement (62, on average).

Unfortunately, many Gen X professionals lack the financial resources to retire well.

Just 54% of Gen X savers said they’re on track for retirement, the lowest percentage of any generation, according to a BlackRock report.

Related: 25% of Boomers Face a Bleak Retirement — Are You Making the Same Mistakes?

An annual research study from Northwestern Mutual casts the spotlight on some of Gen X‘s most pressing retirement issues as the group approaches its golden years.

First, Gen Xers said they’d need $1.57 million to retire comfortably, or $310,000 more than the “magic number” national average, according to the research.

More than half (56%) of Gen Xers thought they’d likely outlive their savings, while just 40% of Boomers and beyond felt the same, per the report.

Related: The National Average Salary Is About $65,000. Here’s What Americans Are Saving for Retirement — How Do Your Stats Compare?

Across all generations, Gen X was the least likely to report the expectation of an inheritance.

Additionally, Gen X respondents were more concerned than millennials or Boomers about paying off their mortgage: 25% compared to 24% and 18%, respectively.

Gen X also reported less understanding of some critical factors that could impact their retirement plans. For example, they had a looser grasp on how inflation (53%) and taxes (49%)

could affect their financial plans, compared to 66% and 62% of Boomers.

Related: Retirees Will Likely Outlive Their Savings in 5 States, Falling Short By Up to $448,000. Here's Where They Have Better Odds.

What's more, 50% of Gen X admitted to a "common blindspot" when it comes to managing their finances: They said they'd prioritized building wealth without doing enough to protect their assets. Just 35% of Boomers felt the same.

"Growth without protection can leave people vulnerable," Jeff Sippel, chief strategy officer at Northwestern Mutual, said. "Especially as you get older, safeguarding what you've built is just as critical as continuing to build. A holistic plan should account for both."

As the oldest members of Gen X continue to turn 60 this year, the so-called "sandwich generation" is getting closer to the typical age for retirement (62, on average).

Unfortunately, many Gen X professionals lack the financial resources to retire well.

Just 54% of Gen X savers said they're on track for retirement, the lowest percentage of any generation, according to a BlackRock report.

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I Fell for a $1.25 Million Scam — Now MrBeast Is Helping Me Hunt Down the Scammers

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

This is hard to admit, but I got scammed out of $1.25 million.

The money is gone, and I can't get it back. But instead of hiding, I've decided to share my story. My recent post on X about the $1.25 million scam went viral with more than 4 million views and thousands of reposts and comments.

MrBeast even chimed in that he would give a $100,000 reward to anyone who could help track down the scammers.

Now that I've had even more time to process the situation, I think it's time to share the lessons I've learned from my $1.25 million mistake.

How it began

A few years ago, I donated $1.2 million to MrBeast's #TeamSeas campaign to help clean up the oceans. After the donation, I was invited to spend a few days with Jimmy (MrBeast) and his team.

So, when they reached out to me again for a donation to MrBeast's Team Water campaign, I naturally wanted to help. During the discussion, we even talked about planning another meet-up.

A few weeks after I donated $1 million to the project, I was added to what looked like a private group text with other

major donors; it didn’t feel out of place at all. In fact, it seemed like the natural next step.

The group looked legitimate. The names were impressive: Mark Rober, Shopify’s Tobi Lütke, Stake’s Ed Craven, Adin Ross. There was banter, casual voice notes and even more talk about the donor trip. It all lined up with what I’d been expecting — and I felt like I was in the “cool crowd.”

Then came the pitch: a crypto investment tied to a major exchange. Everyone in the group “joined.” I didn’t want to be the outsider. So I wired the money. $1.25 million.

Later, I checked in with the real Jimmy and felt my stomach drop. The group text was fake. My money was gone.

Related: The 3 Biggest Mistakes That Made Me a Better Entrepreneur

Lesson 1: Don’t make big decisions when you’re distracted

When the scam was unfolding, I was away at a retreat that I’d been planning all year. This was terrible timing for me, but perfect for the scammers.

I was relaxed and in the completely wrong headspace for any major decisions. My guard was down, and I was the perfect target.

Having reviewed the texts afterward, I see several red flags that would have given me pause any other day. However, I was distracted and made a rash decision.

Tip: Don’t make major decisions when you’re distracted, traveling or emotionally charged. Give yourself the space and energy to sit with the choices and only make a decision with a clear head.

Lesson 2: Listen to reality, not the story you're telling yourself

When I was added to the text group, I honestly wanted it to be real. I'd talked with MrBeast's team previously about planning a trip, and my brain connected the dots, telling me this was all part of the plan.

This also had me overlooking red flags. I didn't verify the phone numbers, and I didn't double-check anything. I trusted what I *wanted* to be true instead of what the evidence showed. I was naive, and it cost me $1.25 million.

Entrepreneurs make this same mistake all the time. We fall in love with our product, our marketing strategy or our "next" big idea. When our customers and data tell us otherwise, we often struggle to accept that reality and continue pushing what we *want* instead of what is *right.*

Tip: Don't fall in love with the story you tell yourself. Trust the data, trust what your customers are telling you, and be willing to adjust or pivot.

Lesson 3: Don't be afraid of mistakes – share them

This was easily the most embarrassing mistake of my life. I'm a successful entrepreneur, and I made more than $50 million before 30 – being scammed was *not* supposed to happen to me.

But, it did.

The easiest way to deal with this mistake would be to hide it. But, I didn't.

Instead, I shared it. First with my family and close friends, then publicly online. The responses ranged from "idiot" to

“martyr,” but overwhelmingly, people appreciated the honesty. Some even admitted they’d been scammed too, but had never told anyone.

And then something unexpected happened: MrBeast himself spoke up. He offered a $100,000 reward for credible information leading to the scammers.

Sharing reframed the story. From personal embarrassment to a community problem worth solving.

Tip: Don’t hide from your mistakes. Own them, talk about them, and turn them into lessons others can learn from.

Related: Beware of SEO Scammers — Here’s How to Spot and Avoid Mediocre SEO Agencies

Final thoughts

I’ll never see the $1.25 million I lost again. But I can use it as the most expensive learning experience of my life.

If you take nothing else from my story, take these:

1. Don’t make important decisions while distracted.
2. If it’s too good to be true, it probably is.
3. Don’t be afraid to talk about your mistakes.

If you’re curious about how this scam actually played out, I’ve made everything public. On Great.com, we’ve posted the full chat logs, the wallet addresses and even the phone numbers tied to the scammers. You can see exactly what I saw — and if you spot something that could help track them down, you could earn the $100,000 reward from MrBeast.

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The Hidden Costs of a Product Recall That Most Entrepreneurs Miss

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For entrepreneurs, few events are more damaging than a product recall. The immediate image is always financial: refunds, fines and settlements. But anyone who has been inside these cases knows the true cost runs far deeper. Recalls erode consumer trust, unravel years of brand building and expose systemic failures in leadership.

I have seen firsthand how these crises unfold. In nearly every instance, the warning signs were there. Companies knew about risks. Employees raised concerns. Complaints trickled in. Yet leadership chose to wait, to monitor, to hope the problem would fade. It never does. When companies delay action,

injuries multiply, lawsuits escalate, and reputations are permanently scarred.

Related: **Soar Above, Rather Than Survive, a Product Recall**

When delay turns deadly

Consider Peloton. The company faced reports of injuries and even the tragic death of a child linked to its Tread+ treadmill. Instead of acting swiftly, Peloton resisted recalling the product. That decision led to one of the largest penalties in Consumer Product Safety Commission history. Peloton paid $19 million for failing to immediately report defects. The fine was only part of the story. The brand damage continues to ripple years later.

Onewheel, the self-balancing electric skateboard, now faces lawsuits tied to sudden stopping issues that led to consumer deaths. The legal actions are only beginning, but the company’s reputation has already been drawn into headlines that focus on tragedy rather than innovation.

Other cases may not grab as many headlines but still leave lasting scars. Ninja recalled hundreds of thousands of pressure cookers after reports of severe burns. Portable blenders were pulled from the market after blades came loose during operation. Werner ladders were recalled when they broke without warning. In every case, the cost of waiting outweighed the cost of acting early.

Lawsuits are the beginning, not the end

When a product injures a consumer, lawsuits arrive quickly. For many founders, that is the first moment they truly grasp the scale of the crisis. Litigation is costly, time-consuming and distracting, but lawsuits are not the end. They are the

beginning.

From my own work in product defect litigation, I have seen how one case rarely stands alone. A single injury multiplies into dozens of filings. What begins as an isolated incident can grow into a class action. Through discovery, internal safety reports, cost-cutting memos and ignored warnings come to light. That evidence does not just determine the verdict – it drives the headlines. The reputational damage is often far worse than the financial cost.

Entrepreneurs must recognize that litigation is not just about settlements and legal fees. It is about the company's culture being put on trial. Once a jury sees that safety took a back seat to profits, rebuilding consumer trust is nearly impossible.

Related: Companies Often Choose Profits Over Consumer Safety – Here's What It Takes to Hold Them Accountable

The leadership failure behind every recall

What connects these cases is not simply defective products. It is defective leadership.

Too often, product safety is left to compliance teams or buried in operations. The CEO only steps in once the crisis explodes. By then, it is too late.

The truth is simple. Product safety is a CEO-level issue. It belongs at the very top of the agenda. Decisions in the first hours and days after a safety concern emerges define the future of a company. Listening to engineers, taking consumer complaints seriously and acting quickly to protect customers are leadership choices. They are not legal technicalities.

Entrepreneurs who understand this protect both their consumers

and their companies. Those who treat safety as a secondary issue risk losing everything they have built.

The hidden costs entrepreneurs miss

Most founders understand the financial hit of a recall. Few recognize the long-term damage that follows.

The hidden costs include the loss of consumer trust that cuts into lifetime customer value, the greater scrutiny from regulators and watchdog groups, higher insurance premiums, difficulty securing future coverage, the distraction of leadership who must focus on crisis management instead of growth and the brand damage that affects hiring, partnerships and investor confidence.

These costs linger long after the settlement checks have been written. They erode the very foundation of a business.

Why acting early saves businesses

Entrepreneurs have one key advantage over larger corporations. They can move quickly. Without layers of bureaucracy, a founder can make bold decisions to protect consumers and preserve trust. Acting early may feel painful in the moment, but it prevents the cascading damage of lawsuits, headlines and regulatory intervention.

The choice is not between acting and ignoring. The choice is between acting early when you have some control or acting later when you have none.

Related: How to Avoid a Product Recall: Quality Control Essentials

Protecting the future of the brand

Every recall is ultimately a test of leadership. The companies that survive are those where CEOs accept responsibility and act decisively. The companies that fail are those where leaders delay, deflect or deny until the crisis consumes them.

For entrepreneurs, the lesson is clear. Safety cannot be delegated away. It cannot be viewed as a legal technicality. It is a core leadership responsibility that protects both people and the future of the business.

The real cost of a recall is not measured only in dollars. It is measured in trust lost, in reputations destroyed and in businesses that never recover. Entrepreneurs who understand this truth will treat safety not as a burden but as the foundation of lasting success.

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Here’s What’s Slowing Blockchain Adoption for Businesses — and the Key to Moving It Forward

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For all the hype around blockchain, many enterprises remain hesitant to make the leap. The hesitation is not about whether blockchain has potential. It is about risk. Most blockchain projects today require committing to a single chain, which is placing a long-term bet on a rapidly shifting market. If the chosen chain fails, becomes too expensive to operate on or is outpaced by competitors, that investment could quickly unravel.

The result is that countless pilots never progress to full-scale deployment. Enterprises stall, developers burn time rewriting code, and innovation slows. Since 2021, over $2.8 billion has been lost to exploits on bridges that were meant to connect ecosystems, highlighting just how fragile current “interoperability” solutions are. Instead of accelerating adoption, fragmentation and lock-in have become two of the biggest barriers holding back blockchain.

Related: Mass Adoption of Blockchain Technology by Entrepreneurs? Major Challenges Are Involved.

The real cost of chain lock-in

Single-chain strategies create hidden costs that compound over time. When enterprises commit to a single blockchain, they inherit not only its current limitations but also all its future uncertainties. Gas fees can spike unexpectedly, making operations prohibitively expensive. Network congestion can degrade user experience at critical moments. Regulatory changes can force sudden pivots that require months of redevelopment.

Consider the enterprises that built exclusively on Ethereum during the 2021 bull run, only to watch transaction costs soar above $100 per interaction. Many were forced to halt operations or scramble to migrate to alternative chains, burning resources that could have been invested in product development instead. This pattern repeats across the industry: promising projects derailed not by market conditions or product-market fit, but by the technical constraints of their chosen blockchain.

Why interoperability matters

True interoperability solves this problem by eliminating the false choice between chains. When applications can run across ecosystems without constant rewrites or risky workarounds, the cost and complexity of blockchain projects drop dramatically. Enterprises gain the flexibility to meet users wherever they are. Developers can focus on building products rather than spending months learning the quirks of every individual chain.

This approach also future-proofs investments. As new chains emerge with improved performance or specialized features, interoperable applications can expand to capture those

benefits without having to start from scratch. The question shifts from “Which chain will win?” to “How can we leverage the best of each ecosystem?”

This principle of building once and deploying everywhere is what will bring blockchain out of experimental silos and into mainstream business adoption.

What enterprises gain

For enterprises, interoperability is not a “nice to have” but a strategic necessity. By ensuring projects can operate across multiple chains, organizations avoid being locked into a single ecosystem. They can adapt as regulations shift, new technologies emerge or user bases migrate between platforms. This flexibility is essential for long-term planning and scalability.

Interoperability also enables enterprises to optimize for specific use cases. A company might use Ethereum for high-value transactions requiring maximum security, Solana for high-frequency trading applications and Cosmos for specialized financial instruments. With true cross-chain capability, these aren’t separate projects but components of a unified strategy.

Related: Union Founder Karel Kubat Talks Interoperability And Trustless Bridges At TOKEN2049 Dubai

What developers gain

For Web2 developers exploring blockchain, interoperability removes a major barrier to entry. Instead of needing to master each chain’s programming languages, development tools and architectural quirks, they can build using familiar workflows and established patterns. This reduces ramp-up time from months to weeks, accelerates product delivery and allows developer teams to focus on user experience and functionality

rather than protocol minutiae.

The productivity gains are substantial. Teams can prototype on one chain, scale on another and optimize across multiple ecosystems without rewriting core business logic. This approach lets developers leverage their existing skills while gradually building blockchain expertise, making the transition more manageable and less risky.

The bigger picture

At an industry level, interoperability will unlock the full potential of tokenized assets, decentralized finance and blockchain-based products across ecosystems. It will accelerate time to market from months to days, reduce integration costs and open doors for enterprises that have remained on the sidelines due to technical complexity.

The network effects are powerful. As more applications become interoperable, the overall ecosystem becomes more valuable to users, who no longer face the friction of managing multiple wallets, bridges and interfaces. This seamless experience is crucial for mainstream adoption.

Actionable steps for business leaders

For blockchain to deliver real value, leaders must treat interoperability as a core requirement rather than an afterthought. Here are concrete steps to get started:

- **Set interoperability as a non-negotiable requirement** when evaluating blockchain vendors, platforms or responding to RFPs. Ask specific questions about cross-chain capabilities during the selection process.
- **Plan around business outcomes** such as time to launch,

user reach and cost efficiency, instead of tying success metrics to performance on a single chain.

- **Encourage developers to design for portability** from day one, ensuring projects can evolve as the ecosystem changes and new opportunities emerge.
- **Hold partners accountable** by asking detailed questions about how their frameworks support cross-chain expansion and prevent vendor lock-in scenarios.
- **Start small but think big** by launching pilots that demonstrate interoperability benefits before committing to large-scale deployments.

Related: **Heading Toward a Multichain World**

The way forward

Blockchain's potential is not in doubt, but its adoption has been slowed by fragmentation and technical barriers that force unnecessary trade-offs. Interoperability addresses both challenges by giving enterprises and developers the freedom to build comprehensive solutions rather than fragmented, experimental solutions.

By embracing the principle of building once and deploying everywhere, organizations can finally move beyond the limitations of individual chains and focus on what truly matters: delivering products and services that create measurable value for users and stakeholders.

Those who embrace interoperability today will be best positioned to capture tomorrow's opportunities as blockchain evolves from an experimental technology to an essential infrastructure.

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