aibrevo

FREE CHECKLIST · 2026 EDITION

The Developer Handover and Ownership Checklist

What you should own and receive when someone else builds your software. 45 checks across the accounts, the code and IP, and the documents a new developer would need, plus a short plan for the first 48 hours if your developer stops answering.

How to use it. Use it before a project starts, at every handover, and any time a developer or agency leaves. Fill in who is owner of each account today.

Anything you cannot tick is a risk to fix now, while your developer is still answering. This is general information, not legal advice; have a lawyer review your contract.

PART 1 OF 4

Accounts you must own

On day one, the accounts matter more than the code. Whoever is owner of these controls the product. Write in who holds the owner role today.

Account and the role your company should hold	Who is owner today	Yours
Domain registrar: registrant Find the registrar with ICANN Lookup. The registrant should be you.		☐
DNS: account owner Often not the registrar. DNS decides where your site and email point.		☐
Cloud or hosting: root user or account owner On AWS, the email that created the account, with complete access.		☐
Code repository: organization owner GitHub recommends no fewer than two organization owners.		☐
App Store Connect: Account Holder Only the Account Holder can start an app transfer. Admin is not enough.		☐
Google Play Console: account owner Full access, and the only one who manages the payments profile.		☐
Stripe or other payments: Account Owner One Account Owner, and only they can transfer ownership.		☐
Database, storage and backups: owner or admin You can log in and download a recent backup.		☐
Email sending and SMS: owner or admin For example SendGrid, Postmark, Mailgun or Twilio.		☐
Analytics, error tracking, maps and AI APIs: owner or admin Each one holds a key the app depends on.		☐
Password manager or shared docs: owner 1Password, Bitwarden, or a shared drive holding credentials.		☐

☐ **Every account opened with a company email, not the developer's.**
An account opened with a developer's email is the hardest kind to get back.

☐ **At least two owners on your side for critical accounts, and the developer as a user.**
One person leaving cannot lock you out, and you can remove the developer when the work ends.

PART 2 OF 4

Code and IP

Under US law, paying for code does not by itself make it yours. A signed written assignment is the document that settles it.

- [ ] **A signed written assignment of IP in the contract.**
  Copyright starts with whoever wrote the code, and a transfer is valid only in a signed writing (17 U.S.C. 201(a) and 204(a)).
- [ ] **The assignment covers code, designs and documentation.**
  Not only the source code.
- [ ] **The assignment comes from the right party.**
  If an agency built it, code its employees wrote belongs to the agency, so the assignment has to come from the agency.
- [ ] **Subcontractors have assigned their rights up the chain.**
  From subcontractor to your developer to you, in writing.
- [ ] **Pre-existing code and libraries listed, with the license you get to them.**
  Developers often keep their own tools and license them to you, while assigning the code written for your project.
- [ ] **A list of open-source dependencies and their licenses.**
  Open-source parts stay under their own licenses, which can set conditions such as attribution.
- [ ] **The repository in your organization, pushed to often.**
  Not a zip file handed over at the end. If you can read the code, keep a full copy.
- [ ] **The app builds and deploys from the repository.**
  Not only from the old developer's machine.
- [ ] **No passwords, API keys or secrets in the code.**
  Hard-coded secrets are a security risk and one of the signs that a codebase may need rebuilding.
- [ ] **Confidentiality terms for your ideas and business logic.**
  Copyright protects the code itself, not its algorithms, logic or system design.
- [ ] **A clause on how AI coding tools may be used.**
  The US Copyright Office says prompts alone are not enough for copyright in AI output.

General information from US Copyright Office guidance (Circulars 30 and 61, and its 2025 report Copyright and Artificial Intelligence, Part 2) and the Copyright Act, checked Nov 11, 2026. Not legal advice. Laws differ by country; ask a lawyer about your contract.

PART 3 OF 4

Documentation to receive

The test of a good handover: another developer could run, change and deploy the software from what you hold, without calling the person who built it.

- [ ] **Setup steps to run the project from a clean machine.**
  Tools, versions and the exact commands, in order.
- [ ] **Deploy steps for each environment.**
  How a change gets from the repository to test and to production, and who can do it.
- [ ] **A list of every environment variable.**
  The name, what it does and where its value is stored. The values themselves stay in a password manager, not in the document.
- [ ] **A credentials list.**
  Every account and service from Part 1, with the login email and who is owner.
- [ ] **An architecture note.**
  The stack, the services, how they connect, and where the data lives.
- [ ] **A known issues list.**
  Bugs, shortcuts and unfinished parts, written down before handover rather than found later.
- [ ] **How to run the tests, and what they cover.**
  Tests that run are what prove old features still work after a change.
- [ ] **A recorded video walkthrough of the system.**
  The main screens, the admin side, the code layout and a deploy, in the developer's own words.
- [ ] **Release notes or a change log.**
  What changed, when and why.
- [ ] **Upcoming platform and renewal dates.**
  Apple and Google requirements, certificates, domain and membership renewals.
- [ ] **A test handover: someone else deploys from the documents.**
  If they get stuck, the documentation is not finished.

PART 4 OF 4

If your developer disappears: the first 48 hours

Secure access before anything else. Do not start with angry messages or a new developer; neither helps until you control the accounts.

- [ ] **Look up your domain and log in at the registrar.**
  ICANN Lookup shows the registrar. If you cannot log in, call the registrar first.
- [ ] **Confirm you can edit DNS.**
  Whoever controls DNS controls where your site and email point.
- [ ] **Check who holds the cloud root user or account owner.**
  On AWS, root account settings can only be changed by signing in as root on a standalone account.
- [ ] **Download a full copy of the code today, if you can read it.**
  If the server runs readable code, have a developer copy everything there before anything changes.
- [ ] **Check your role in App Store Connect and Play Console.**
  Only Apple's Account Holder can start an app transfer, and the receiver has 60 days to accept. On Google Play, the account holding the app submits the transfer.
- [ ] **Confirm a recent database backup exists and you can reach it.**
  Managed databases, file storage and backups.
- [ ] **Check payments, email, SMS, analytics and AI accounts.**
  Write down the login email, the owner, and whether the developer still has access.
- [ ] **Remove the developer's access, then rotate secrets, in that order.**
  Rotating a key the live app depends on breaks it until the new key is set, so do this with someone who can update the configuration.
- [ ] **Send one dated written request for the code, credentials and documents.**
  Name what you want, where, and by when. Keep it factual, and do not withhold a payment you owe without advice first.
- [ ] **Decide to finish or rebuild only after an independent code review.**
  Without the source code, the live app becomes the specification for a rebuild.

Checked Nov 11, 2026 against Apple, Google, GitHub, AWS, Stripe and ICANN pages. Store and provider rules change; check each provider before you act. For a dispute, talk to a lawyer.

TAKING OVER FROM ANOTHER DEVELOPER?

Get your handover checked against this list, free

On a free 30-minute call, we go through what you hold against this checklist and tell you what to secure first, whether or not you hire us. Bring whatever you have, even if it is only logins and a live app.

Project builds get a fixed-price quote in writing; we also work hourly. App and web app builds run from $7,000 to around $25,000-$30,000, and larger builds are quoted on their scope. On every build, you own the code.

Book the free 30-minute call

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