Your developer's gone quiet. What do you need before someone else takes over?

When the person who built your software stops replying, the biggest risk is not knowing who holds the accounts it runs on. Start with the job it keeps running. Record who holds what, then pick one small, safe next step and an owner.

> Names or roles only. Never write passwords, keys, private links or login details on this sheet. You only need to know who holds each account, not how to get in.

1. Start with the job it keeps running

What does the software do that the business can't go without?

Who relies on it each day?

What's waiting to be done? (optional)

2. Record who holds what

Tick one box for each item. "Not sure" is a useful answer. It shows you where to start.

					Who holds it? (name or role)
The code	Who has the latest copy of the code, and could share it with a new developer?	☐ We have it	☐ Someone else	☐ Not sure	
Hosting	Where does the software run, and whose account is it in?	☐ We have it	☐ Someone else	☐ Not sure	
Domain name	Who registered the web address, and whose account renews it?	☐ We have it	☐ Someone else	☐ Not sure	
Connected services	Which services does it rely on, such as payments, email, maps or accounting? Whose accounts are they?	☐ We have it	☐ Someone else	☐ Not sure	
Bills and renewals	Who pays for hosting, licences and subscriptions, and when do they renew?	☐ We have it	☐ Someone else	☐ Not sure	
Backups	Are there backups? Who could restore one, and when was that last checked?	☐ We have it	☐ Someone else	☐ Not sure	
Notes and documentation	Are there setup notes? Is there a separate copy for testing changes, and who can arrange access?	☐ We have it	☐ Someone else	☐ Not sure	
Support contacts	Who do you call when it breaks, and who else has worked on it?	☐ We have it	☐ Someone else	☐ Not sure	

3. Choose your first move

Which unknown would hurt most if the software stopped?

Start with an item you ticked “Not sure”.

Who can you ask?

Someone with a legitimate reason to know: the developer, the bill payer or the supplier who introduced you.

What’s the first small change a new developer should make?

Something low-risk from the backlog.

What would you see that shows it worked?

Something anyone can check.

> Example (made up): a booking system that sends drivers their run sheet each morning. The domain and bills are in the business’s name, the hosting is on the developer’s account and nobody is sure where backups go. Next action: the operations manager asks the developer where backups are kept and who could restore one by Friday.

4. Agree your next action

One action someone can do this week

Who will do it?

By when?

5. Ask for the handover, politely

Adapt this short request. Leave out any item you already hold. It asks who holds each account, never for passwords.
Hold everything already? Ask instead when they can complete the handover, about any work that’s in progress or not yet finished, and about anything that’s owed.

Hi [developer’s name],

Thanks for the work you’ve done on our software. The business relies on it every day, so we’re putting an orderly handover in place to keep it well looked after. We’d appreciate your help.

Could you let us know by [date]:

- where the latest version of the code is kept, and how we can get a copy in the business’s name
- which hosting account the software runs in, whose name it’s in, and who renews the domain name
- which outside services it connects to, and which bills and renewals it depends on
- where backups are kept, any setup notes, who can arrange access to a separate test copy, and who else has supported it

Please don’t send passwords or keys by email. Once we know who holds each account, we’ll arrange access with the account holder. If any work is in progress or anything is owed, let us know so we can settle it properly.

Thanks, [your name]

6. Comparing developers to take over?

Ask each one before they talk about code. A good answer starts with how your business runs.

1. What does our software need to keep doing every day, and who relies on it?
2. What would you check first, and what would you need us to authorise?
3. What’s the first small change you’d make, and how would we both know it worked?

Stuck on one item? Bring Calo the handover item you’re stuck on: calo.nz/contact?topic=developer-handover