FREE TEMPLATE · HIRING A DEVELOPER · 2026

Brief it right.

One page that gets you comparable quotes, plus the contract checklist.

Why this matters: paying for an app doesn't automatically mean you own it. Custom software from an outside contractor usually can't be a “work made for hire”, so contracts that rely only on that phrase can leave ownership unclear (Association of Corporate Counsel). And vague briefs get quotes you can't compare.

How to use this: fill in page 2 and send the same page to every developer. Before you sign, check the contract against page 3.



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THE BRIEF

Fill this in, then send it to every developer

APP NAME (WORKING)

DECISION-MAKER
Who signs off each week

WHO IT'S FOR
Name the user, not “everyone”

THE ONE PROBLEM IT SOLVES
My app helps ___ do ___ without ___.

WHAT A USER DOES, STEP BY STEP
From opening the app to getting the result (5–8 steps)

MUST HAVE IN VERSION ONE

LATER, NOT NOW

PLATFORMS
iPhone · Android · web dashboard

INTEGRATIONS
Payments, maps, calendar, SMS, CRM, AI

BUDGET RANGE

TARGET LAUNCH DATE

Same page to every developer = quotes you can actually compare.

CONTRACT

6 things the contract must cover

01 Assignment of rights to you

WHY Under US copyright law, contractor-built custom software usually can't be a work made for hire, so ownership can stay unclear.

DO An explicit assignment of all rights in the code, designs and content to you, effective when you pay.

02 Accounts in your name

WHY Whoever owns the store account, code repository and domain controls the app's future.

DO App Store, Google Play, repo, domain and hosting registered to you, with the developer added as a user.

03 Scope and change process

WHY Every app changes during the build. Unclear change pricing is how budgets double.

DO A written feature list, what's out of scope, and how changes get priced before work starts.

04 Milestone payments

WHY Paying everything upfront removes your leverage.

DO Deposit, then payments for approved designs, a test build on your phone, and the store release.

05 Warranty and support

WHY Bugs show up once real users arrive.

DO A bug-fix warranty period after launch and the support rate after it, in writing.

06 Confidentiality and components

WHY Third-party and open-source code comes with licenses you inherit.

DO An NDA plus a list of third-party and open-source components and their licenses.

California note: if you hire an individual (not a company), the state's ABC test presumes the worker is an employee unless you prove otherwise (CA Department of Industrial Relations), and a standard work-for-hire clause with an individual consultant can create problems under Labor Code section 3351.5(c) (CA Department of General Services).

Sources: Association of Corporate Counsel, Software as a Work Made for Hire in the United States (acc.com). CA DIR, Independent contractor versus employee FAQ (dir.ca.gov). CA DGS, Intellectual Property Management Plan (dgs.ca.gov).

General information, not legal advice. For anything beyond a small project, have an attorney read the contract before you sign. Next step: book a free 30-minute scoping call at globalmcliensoftwaresolutions.com/contact.