

Who Really Owns Your AI-Built App?

A 20-point audit for founders with a vibe-coded prototype (Lovable, Bolt, Replit, Cursor or a freelancer using AI). No coding needed: you're checking who holds the keys, not reading code.

Tick one box per line. **"Not sure" counts as No.** If you need to ask your developer, ask for proof (a screenshot of the account), not a yes.

		Yes	No	Not sure
A · Ownership: you hold the keys		Any No here is urgent		
1	The code lives in a GitHub or GitLab account your company owns, and you're an owner. Not your developer's personal account.	☐	☐	☐
2	The domain name is registered to you, with a login you control.	☐	☐	☐
3	Hosting (Vercel, Netlify, AWS or similar) is in your account and billed to your card.	☐	☐	☐
4	The database and file storage sit in your account.	☐	☐	☐
5	You own the AI builder account, and you've tested exporting the full code.	☐	☐	☐
6	Your written agreement says you own the code and IP anyone built for you.	☐	☐	☐
B · Security: nobody else can get in		Any No here is urgent		
7	No passwords or API keys are written into the code. They should be stored as "environment variables" or "secrets". Ask your developer to show you where.	☐	☐	☐
8	Users can only see their own data. Test it: log in as two different users and try to open each other's records.	☐	☐	☐
9	Admin pages need a login. They aren't just hidden links.	☐	☐	☐
10	Payments run through a provider like Stripe. The app never stores card numbers.	☐	☐	☐
11	Two-factor login is on for your code, hosting, domain and email accounts.	☐	☐	☐

C · Data and privacy

- | | | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 12 | You know what personal data the app collects and which country it's stored in. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 13 | Your privacy policy matches what the app actually does with that data. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 14 | Backups run automatically, and someone has tested restoring one. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

D · Maintainability: someone else could take over

- | | | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 15 | A developer other than the one who built it could explain how it works in 15 minutes. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 16 | There's a short README: how to run it, how to deploy it, where settings live. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 17 | Every change is saved in version history (commits), not just overwritten. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 18 | There's a test copy (staging), so changes aren't made straight on the live app. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

E · Cost and running

- | | | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 19 | You know the monthly running cost, and spend alerts are set.
Hosting, database and AI usage bills can jump without warning. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 20 | You'd find out within an hour if the app went down.
An uptime alert or error emails that reach you, not just the developer. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

Your score

Count of No + Not sure: _____ / 20

0 to 3 Stable

Keep selling and building. Fix the gaps this month and re-run the audit before every big release.

4 to 8 Patch first

Pause new features for a week. Close every gap in A and B, then write the README so you're not tied to one person.

9+, or any No in A Stop and check

Stop adding features. Get a technical second opinion on whether to stabilise or rebuild, before you spend more or sign more customers.

Want to test your idea with other founders?

Join a live Lean CPTO workshop for non-technical founders.

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