

# The Handoff Warrant Checklist

Twenty-two questions to ask before you accept any automation or AI system from any builder — including us. If the answer to any item is no, the system is not finished; it is merely delivered.

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## i. Evidence

*A system you cannot inspect is a promise, not an asset.*

- 01 Audit trail exists.** Every run writes what it saw, what it decided, and why — somewhere you can read without the builder present.

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- 02 Decisions are attributable.** For any output, you can trace which input, rule, or model produced it.

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- 03 The demo data is gone.** Test fixtures, sample rows, and sandbox keys have been removed from production paths.

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- 04 You hold the credentials.** Every API key, account, and repository is owned by your organization, not the contractor's.

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## ii. Gates

*Tests that only the builder can run are tests you do not have.*

- 05 Quality gates are executable.** A documented, one-command test suite exists — and you have watched it run green.

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- 06 Gates cover the failure you fear most.** The suite tests the expensive mistake (wrong invoice, wrong customer, wrong amount), not just the happy path.

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- 07 Malformed input is handled.** You have seen the system receive garbage — a corrupt file, an empty field, a duplicate — and fail safely.

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- 08 Rate limits and outages are survivable.** The upstream API going down produces a queued retry, not silent data loss.

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- 09 Runs are resumable.** A job killed mid-flight can restart without duplicating work or skipping records.

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### **iii. Control**

*Autonomy is earned, never shipped.*

- 10 A human approves the irreversible.** Payments, sends, deletions, and postings pause for sign-off until the system has earned otherwise.

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- 11 There is an off switch.** You know the one action that halts the system entirely — and you have tested it.

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- 12 Escalation has a name.** When the system is unsure, a specific person is notified — not a shared inbox nobody reads.

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- 13 Model behavior is pinned.** The AI model and prompt versions are fixed and recorded; an upstream vendor update cannot silently change your outputs.

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- 14 Drift has a boundary.** Someone defined what "the outputs have gone wrong" means numerically, and something watches for it.

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### **iv. Continuity**

*The test of a handoff is the builder's absence.*

- 15 Someone on your side can operate it.** A named person has run the system start-to-finish without the builder on the call.

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- 16 The runbook exists.** Restart, common errors, and "who to call" fit on pages you possess, in plain language.

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- 17 Lessons are recorded.** Everything that broke during the build — and the fix — is written down, not folklore in the builder's head.

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- 18 Costs are forecast.** You know the monthly run-rate (API usage, hosting, licenses) and what makes it spike.

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- 19 Exit is provided for.** If the vendor disappears tomorrow, the code, data, and documentation in your possession are enough for a competent successor.

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## v. The Warrant

*If no one will sign it, believe them.*

- 20 A governance report was delivered.** Plain-language: what the system may do alone, what it must ask permission for, and what it may never do.

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- 21 Something is signed.** The builder put their name to what was delivered, what was tested, and what is warranted to keep working.

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- 22 The watch continues.** There is a standing arrangement — retainer, contract, or internal owner — for monitoring, gate re-runs, and drift review. Shipped is the beginning, not the end.

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### Scoring, the Everward way.

22 of 22 — the system is under ward; sleep well. · 18–21 — close the gaps before the builder leaves; they are cheapest now. · Below 18 — you do not own an automation; you rent a liability with good manners.