

2026 HIRING MANAGER'S GUIDE

US IT Contract Rate Guide

What companies are paying for software talent in 2026: hourly contract rates and full-time salary equivalents by role, experience level and US region.

14

IT roles covered

5

experience levels

4

US regions incl. remote

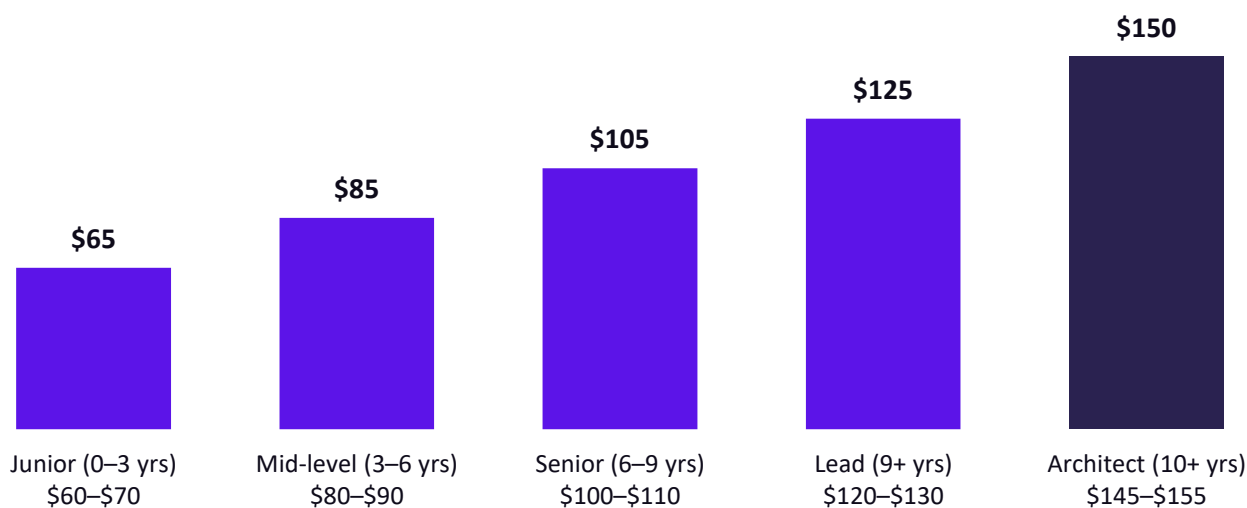
20

market data sources

The 2026 market at a glance

Planning a contract hire and need a realistic budget? This guide shows the typical hourly rate the US market is paying right now, so you can set your budget before the first resume lands. All rates are what a company typically pays per hour for a contract consultant through a staffing partner.

Software Developer: typical hourly rate by experience



Bar = midpoint of the typical \$10 band shown under each level. National baseline, \$ per hour.

1

Experience is the biggest lever

Moving from mid-level to senior adds roughly \$20/hr. A lead or architect costs about double a junior developer.

2

Location matters less than you think

Most remote roles price at the national baseline. Onsite roles in premium metros like San Francisco or New York run 5–12% higher.

3

Budget with a range, not a number

Candidates with the same experience ask for different rates. A \$10/hr budget band covers most of the market.

Quick definitions

Contract rate: the hourly amount a company pays for a contract consultant, including the staffing partner's costs.

FTE salary equivalent: the average annual base salary for the same role if hired full-time, before bonus and benefits.

Remote: fully remote within the US, priced at the national baseline.

Contract rate card by role

Use the **typical rate** to set your budget. The **market range** shows where the lowest and highest quotes usually fall. Add the regional adjustment on page 4 for onsite or hybrid roles.

Role	Experience	Typical rate	Market range	FTE salary
Software Developer	Junior (0–3 yrs)	\$60–\$70	\$50–\$80	\$82K
	Mid-level (3–6 yrs)	\$80–\$90	\$70–\$100	\$110K
	Senior (6–9 yrs)	\$100–\$110	\$90–\$125	\$137K
	Lead (9+ yrs)	\$120–\$130	\$110–\$140	\$161K
Frontend Developer	Mid-level (3–6 yrs)	\$85–\$95	\$70–\$105	\$113K
	Senior (6+ yrs)	\$105–\$115	\$90–\$130	\$141K
Backend Developer	Mid-level (3–6 yrs)	\$90–\$100	\$80–\$115	\$123K
	Senior (6+ yrs)	\$110–\$120	\$100–\$140	\$150K
Full Stack Developer	Mid-level (3–6 yrs)	\$90–\$100	\$80–\$115	\$124K
	Senior (6+ yrs)	\$115–\$125	\$100–\$140	\$156K
Technical Lead	8+ yrs	\$125–\$135	\$115–\$155	\$168K
Technical Architect	10+ yrs	\$145–\$155	\$130–\$180	\$192K
Solution / Enterprise Architect	12+ yrs	\$165–\$175	\$140–\$200	\$216K
Business Analyst	Mid-level (3–6 yrs)	\$85–\$95	\$70–\$105	\$113K
	Senior (6+ yrs)	\$105–\$115	\$90–\$130	\$143K
Project Manager	Mid-level (5–8 yrs)	\$90–\$100	\$80–\$115	\$124K
	Senior (8+ yrs)	\$120–\$130	\$100–\$150	\$161K
Scrum Master	Mid-level (3–6 yrs)	\$85–\$95	\$70–\$105	\$113K
	Senior (6+ yrs)	\$105–\$115	\$90–\$130	\$143K
QA / Test Engineer	Mid-level (3–6 yrs)	\$65–\$75	\$55–\$90	\$92K
	Senior (6+ yrs)	\$90–\$100	\$80–\$115	\$124K
DevOps Engineer	Mid-level (3–6 yrs)	\$95–\$105	\$85–\$125	\$132K
	Senior (6+ yrs)	\$125–\$135	\$110–\$155	\$168K

Rates reflect contract consultants engaged through a staffing partner at the US national baseline. FTE salary equivalents are average annual base pay before bonus and benefits.

Rates by US region

Rates shift based on where the consultant needs to work. Fully remote roles price at the national baseline. Hybrid and onsite roles follow the local market: the West Coast and major East Coast cities run higher, while the Central and Midwest markets sit at or slightly below the baseline.

Software Developer: typical hourly rate by region

Level	West Coast	East Coast	Central / Midwest	Remote (US)
Junior 0–3 yrs	\$60–\$70	\$60–\$70	\$60–\$65	\$60–\$70
Mid-level 3–6 yrs	\$80–\$95	\$75–\$95	\$75–\$85	\$80–\$90
Senior 6–9 yrs	\$100–\$120	\$95–\$115	\$95–\$105	\$100–\$110
Lead 9+ yrs	\$115–\$140	\$110–\$135	\$110–\$125	\$120–\$130
Architect 10+ yrs	\$140–\$165	\$135–\$165	\$135–\$150	\$145–\$155

\$ per hour. Regional ranges run from the lowest-cost to the highest-cost metro in each region. Other roles follow the same pattern.

Where each metro sits vs. the national baseline

West Coast		East Coast		Central / Midwest	
San Francisco Bay Area	+12%	New York (Manhattan)	+10%	Chicago	Baseline
San Jose / Silicon Valley	+12%	Washington DC / NoVA	+8%	Denver	Baseline
Seattle	+10%	Boston	+7%	Austin	Baseline
Los Angeles	+5%	Philadelphia	Baseline	Minneapolis	–2%
San Diego	+5%	Atlanta	–5%	Dallas / Fort Worth	–4%
Phoenix	–6%	Miami	–6%	Nashville	–8%
		Charlotte	–8%	Detroit	–10%
		Tampa	–10%		

Example: a Senior Developer for a hybrid role in Los Angeles (3 days onsite) prices at about **\$110–\$115/hr**. The same role fully remote prices at about **\$100–\$110/hr**, and onsite in Chicago at about **\$100–\$110/hr**.

What moves the rate

1 Skill scarcity

Niche skills like Adobe Experience Manager (AEM) Cloud Service, headless CMS, AI/ML and data engineering push rates toward the top of the range.

2 Onsite requirements

Hybrid and onsite roles in high-cost metros add 5–12%. Opening a role to remote candidates widens your talent pool and often lowers the rate.

3 Contract length

Short engagements (under 3 months) usually price higher than 6–12 month contracts.

4 Urgency

Roles that need someone to start within a week or two leave less room to negotiate.

5 Engagement type

W-2 and corp-to-corp (C2C) engagements can differ by up to ~10%, depending on how the consultant is set up.

6 Clearance & compliance

Security clearance or regulated-industry experience (healthcare, insurance, energy) adds a premium.

Hiring for Adobe Experience Manager (AEM)?

AEM is our core specialty. Here's what the market pays for AEM-specific roles:

\$45–\$55/hr

AEM Content Author
Junior

\$65–\$75/hr

AEM Content Author
Senior

\$90–\$100/hr

AEM Functional Consultant
Mid-level

\$115–\$125/hr

AEM Functional Consultant
Senior

Have a role open right now?

Send us your job description and we'll come back with a rate check for your location and matched, pre-screened profiles. is a WBE / MBE certified IT staffing firm placing AEM, Salesforce, AWS, DevOps and AI/data talent for Fortune 500 teams in healthcare, insurance and energy.

[Onwardpath.com](https://onwardpath.com)

Methodology & disclaimer. Rates are directional market benchmarks compiled from public compensation data (Salary.com, ZipRecruiter, Glassdoor, VelvetJobs, SalaryExpert, Robert Half, Built In, KORE1, US Bureau of Labor Statistics) and live job postings on Dice and Indeed, Q2–Q3 2026, cross-checked against requirements Onwardpath works on. Actual rates vary by technology, location, engagement type, contract length and market conditions. This guide is for general information only and is not a quote, offer or guarantee of pricing.