



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Twelve Questions Before Your Pack Goes to Print.

Ask them before you sign a packaging design or rendering contract. A studio worth hiring answers all twelve in one email. The wrong one goes quiet when you ask about your dieline.

START HERE

Every failure was visible before you signed

Packaging projects rarely fail on the hero shot. A glossy jar on a coloured background is in every portfolio. They fail on the five things below, and every one of them could have been spotted in the first email, if anyone had asked.

WHAT THE SALES CALL PROMISED	WHAT YOU FIND OUT IN WEEK TWO
01 "Your label, wrapped perfectly"	The artwork stretches around the jar, the bleed disappears at the seam, and the retail buyer notices it before you do.
02 "We have a mockup for that"	The image shows a stock bottle with someone else's cap and shoulders, not the pack you will actually ship.
03 "Colours will match"	The render drifts from your Pantone and the printed proof, and the listing promises a colour the box does not have.
04 "Foil and emboss, no problem"	Foil reads as grey paint, soft-touch as plastic and kraft as flat brown, so the premium finish you paid for disappears.
05 "We'll have it ready"	The images arrive after the buyer meeting, the pre-order launch or the print order. None of those dates moves for a late render.

You are not choosing a portfolio. You are choosing a process.

The twelve questions on the next two pages test the process. Each one maps to one of the failures above, and each has an answer you can check.



Maverick Frame production render.

THE TEST, PART ONE

Questions 1 to 6: the dieline, the label, the date

Send these as they are. You are not looking for enthusiasm; you are looking for numbers, names and dates. Vague answers are an answer too.

ASK THIS	A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE	WALK AWAY IF
1. What do you need from us to start?	The dieline with dimensions, print-ready label artwork, colour references or a printed sample, and the list of SKUs.	"Send us a finished 3D model first."
2. How do you keep the label exact on a curved or folded pack?	The pack is built to the dieline, the artwork is mapped panel by panel and every seam is checked at full size.	"We place it on a mockup template."
3. Do you build our exact pack, or use a stock model?	Your structure, cap, closure and proportions, modelled from the dieline, drawings or a sample.	"A similar bottle will look the same."
4. When would I see the first preview, counted from complete files?	A number of working days, and what "complete" means.	"As soon as possible" or no number at all.
5. What happens if the buyer meeting or the launch moves forward?	A rush option with a price, stated before you need it.	"We'll make it work" with no price attached.
6. How many revision rounds are included, and what counts as one?	A fixed number, with a round defined as one consolidated list of comments from your team.	"Unlimited revisions."

Why questions 2 and 3 matter most

A pack is judged by people who will hold the real one. A retail buyer compares it with the sample, a customer zooms into the label on a phone and your printer checks it against the proof. Both questions are decided by how the studio treats your dieline before it starts.



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THE TEST, PART TWO

Questions 7 to 12: finishes, SKUs, formats, files

ASK THIS

A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

WALK AWAY IF

7. How do you build foil, emboss, soft-touch and kraft?

As separate materials with their own reflection and depth, approved in a close-up before the full set.

"We add a shine in post."

8. How do you match the render to our printed colours?

Pantone or CMYK references, and a printed sample photographed under neutral light, before any mood lighting.

"Screens differ, colours never match."

9. How do you price the other SKUs, flavours and sizes?

A price per variant from an approved camera and light: the model stays, the label and finish change.

Every SKU quoted as a new render.

10. Which formats do you deliver for Amazon, the store, retail and print?

Marketplace sizes on pure white, web and social crops, print resolution, agreed before cameras are framed.

"We send JPEGs, you resize them."

11. Can you update the renders when the artwork changes?

Yes, from the same model: a new label is a swap and a re-render, priced up front.

A new project for every artwork change.

12. Who exactly will work on our files, and is any part passed on?

Named roles on the studio's own team, an NDA before files change hands, nothing published without approval.

"Our network", a pause, or silence.

10 - 12

GOOD ANSWERS: HIRE, AND ASK FOR THE FIRST DRAFT DATE IN WRITING

7 - 9

ASK FOR ONE PAID TEST VIEW BEFORE COMMITTING THE SET

0 - 6

WALK AWAY, HOWEVER STRONG THE PORTFOLIO LOOKS

The question studios dodge most often is number 12

Subcontracting is common and not always bad. Hiding it is the problem. An unreleased pack should not travel to people you never signed an NDA with, and a wrong label cannot be fixed by a team you are not allowed to talk to.



Maverick Frame production render.

SEND IT

One email, three studios, one day

Copy the email below, fill in the brackets and send it to three studios on the same day. Compare the replies side by side: the differences show up in the first answer, not in the portfolio.

THE EMAIL TO SEND		
01	Subject	Packaging renders for [brand or range], quote and twelve questions
02	Line 1	We need [number] views of [a box / a bottle or can / a jar / a pouch / a range of N SKUs] for [Amazon / our store / a retail buyer / a pre-order page / the launch campaign] by [date].
03	Line 2	Attached, or after you sign our NDA: the dieline, the label artwork, colour references and two references for the look.
04	Line 3	Please answer the twelve questions below with numbers and names, not ranges.
05	Line 4	Paste questions 1 to 12 from pages 03 and 04.
06	Line 5	We will decide within a week of receiving all three replies.

What good replies have in common

They are short. They answer in working days, name the people, offer an NDA and ask you one or two questions back about the SKUs, the channels and your launch date.

What we would answer

Our own numbers are on the next page, in the same format, so you can score us with the same test.



Maverick Frame production render.

WHAT THINGS COST

Market rates and our terms, so you can check any quote

Ranges seen across the market in 2026, freelancer to studio. Use them to sanity-check any quote, including ours.

DELIVERABLE	FREELANCER	STUDIO
Single exterior still	\$100 - 300	\$250 - 600
Single interior still	\$120 - 350	\$300 - 700
Package of 5 - 8 views	\$600 - 1,500	\$1,500 - 4,000
Animation, per minute	\$1,000 - 3,000	\$3,000 - 8,000

Our standard timelines and revision terms. They are what we quote unless a project needs something else, and we say so before work starts.

STAGE OR DELIVERABLE	MAVERICK FRAME STANDARD
First draft of a still	3 to 5 working days from a complete brief
Finished stills, package of 5 - 8	2 to 3 weeks, drafts included
Animation, up to one minute	4 to 6 weeks, storyboard and preview first
Revision rounds included	Two at draft stage, one on the final image
What counts as a round	One consolidated list of comments, sent at once
Rush delivery	Half the time for about 40% more, when the schedule allows

Line up a studio before the deadline is on fire

The most expensive projects we see are not the badly briefed ones. They are the ones briefed in a panic, after the first supplier failed and the launch date did not move. Vet one or two studios while nothing is urgent.

A note on in-house: one artist needs around ten software subscriptions, a workstation and a stack of adjacent skills - modelling, lighting, post-production and client communication. It pays off only when that person is busy every day. Below that, the arithmetic favours outsourcing on its own.

NEXT

Send us what you already have

Plans, a model, photographs or a draft brief, in whatever state they are in. We will reply with a scope, a price and the questions that decide it - as a reply, not a sales call.

The contact form	maverickframe.com/contacts/
Packaging work	maverickframe.com/services/3d-packaging-rendering-services/
Or simply	reply to the email this guide arrived in.

Written by the people who read these briefs

Dim Kuzmenko is a co-founder of Maverick Frame Studio. The figures in this guide come from our own inbox and our own rate card, not from an industry survey.