

FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Twelve Questions Before Your Masterplan Floats in a Void.

Ask them before you sign an aerial or site plan rendering contract. A studio worth hiring answers all twelve in one email. The wrong one goes quiet when you ask about the context.

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START HERE

Every failure was visible before you signed

Aerial rendering projects rarely fail on image quality. Every portfolio has a golden-hour flyover. 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 THREE
01 "The masterplan is quick, it's one image"	Building the context takes longer than anyone said. The aerial lands after the investor pack has gone out.
02 "Priced per render, nice and simple"	The site plan, the labelled sales plan, the hoarding and the web banner each cost a full render, from one scene.
03 "I'll handle it personally"	Phase two moves three plots and a road. The freelancer has moved on, and the site scene cannot be reopened.
04 "Our in-house 3D team"	The agency passes your masterplan and drone footage to a subcontractor you have never met. Comments travel through two inboxes.
05 "We only do the aerials"	The ground-level views come from another vendor's model. The buildings in the two sets no longer match.

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.



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THE TEST, PART ONE

Questions 1 to 6: site, time and money

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. When would I see the first draft, counted from complete site data?	A number of working days, what counts as complete data, and whether building the context adds to it.	"As soon as possible" or no number at all.
2. What date would the finished set land, and what could move it?	A date, plus what would push it: a late survey, missing drone footage, a revised masterplan.	A date with no conditions, or no date.
3. What happens if the investor meeting moves forward by a week?	A rush option with a price, roughly half the time for around 40% more.	"We'll make it work" with no price attached.
4. Once the site is built, what does another angle or a closer view cost?	Noticeably less than the first view, because the terrain, buildings and lighting already exist.	Every extra angle priced as a new render.
5. What does a labelled plan, a hoarding crop or a banner cost?	A small fee or included, since it comes from the same master file.	A new render fee for each format.
6. How many revision rounds are included, and what counts as one?	A fixed number, typically two at draft and one on the final, with a round defined as one consolidated list.	"Unlimited revisions". It means nobody has priced them.

Why question 1 matters most

An aerial is mostly context: terrain, roads, neighbouring buildings, trees. That work is invisible in the quote and easy to underestimate. Ask what the draft date is counted from and whether the context is already in it.



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THE TEST, PART TWO

Questions 7 to 12: people and the site file

ASK THIS

A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

WALK AWAY IF

7. Who exactly will model the site and render the aerials?	Named roles on the studio's own team, and who you will talk to day to day.	"Our partners", "our network", or silence.
8. Who shoots the drone plate, and is any other part passed on?	A clear split: your footage, a named drone pilot, or context built from map data, and why.	A pause, then "we have a trusted team".
9. If my contact is away, who picks up the project?	A second person who already knows the site scene.	It depends on one person being available.
10. When plots, roads or phases change, can you reopen the site scene?	Yes: the working scene is archived, so a revised masterplan starts from it, not from zero.	Only the final JPEGs exist after delivery.
11. Can the same scene give a flyover and ground-level views?	Yes, from the same site model, so the aerial and street views show the same buildings.	"We'd bring in a partner for that."
12. What would you need from me to start this week?	A short list: the masterplan in CAD, survey or map data, drone footage if any, the angles you need.	A thirty-page questionnaire before a quote.

10 - 12

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

7 - 9

ASK FOR ONE PAID TEST ANGLE BEFORE COMMITTING THE SET

0 - 6

WALK AWAY, HOWEVER STRONG THE PORTFOLIO LOOKS

The question studios dodge most often is number 8

Using a drone pilot or map data is normal. Hiding who does what is the problem, because a mismatch between the plate and the model is fixed faster when you can talk to everyone involved.



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SEND IT

One email, three studios, one day

You do not need a call to run the test. Paste the email below, attach what you already have, and send it to the three studios on your shortlist at the same time. Replies arrive within a working day, and the difference between them is usually obvious by the second paragraph.

THE EMAIL TO SEND

01	Subject	Aerial renders for [site], quote and twelve questions
02	Line 1	We need [number] aerial views and a site plan of [development] in [city] for [investors / sales / planning] by [date].
03	Line 2	Attached: the masterplan, survey data, drone footage if we have it and two references.
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 and dollars, name the people, and ask you one or two questions back about the site data and the angles.

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.



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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/
Aerial work	maverickframe.com/services/aerial-rendering/
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.