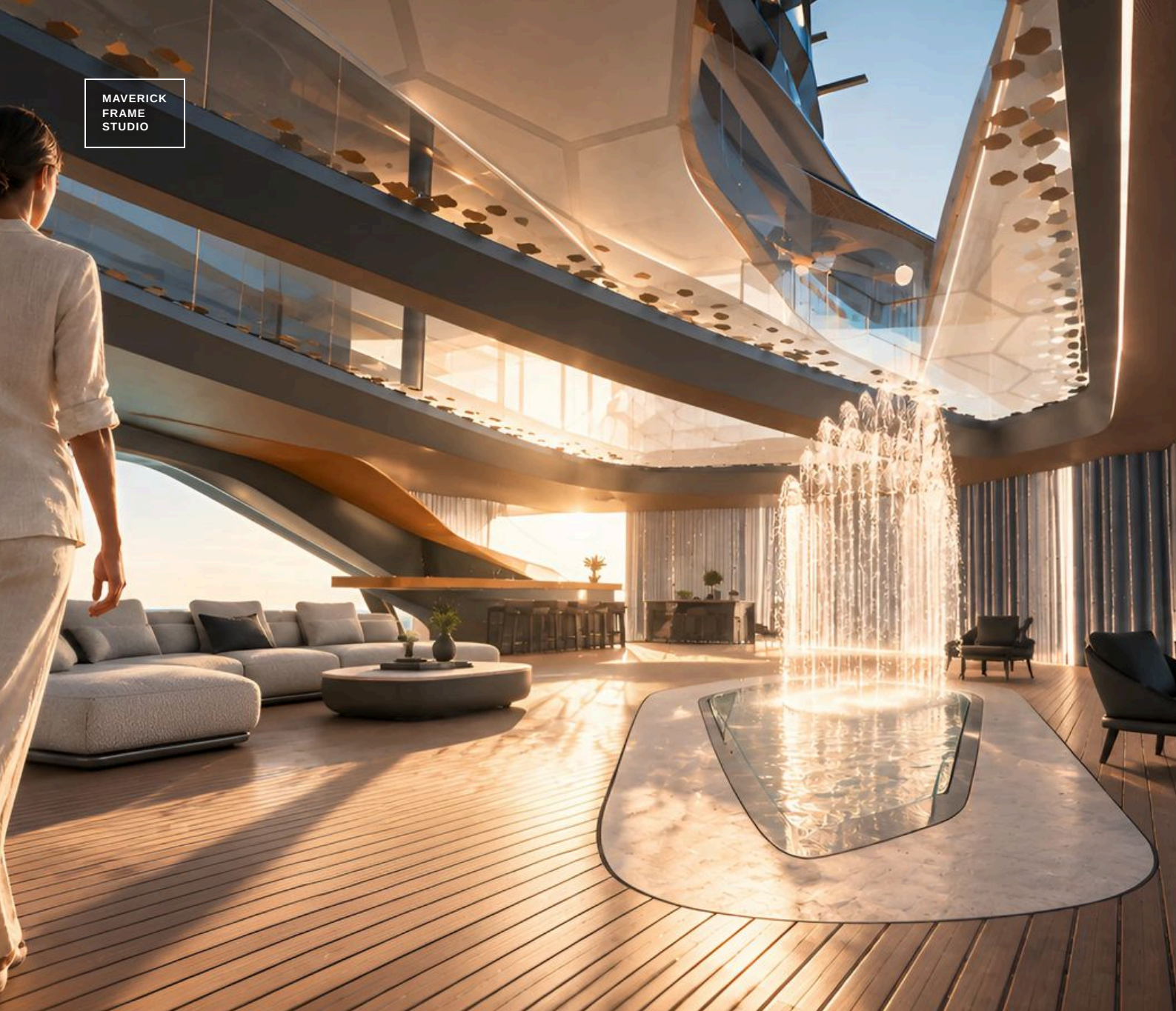




FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Twelve Questions Before Your Product Melts on Screen.

Ask them before you sign an AI video contract. A studio worth hiring answers all twelve in one email. The wrong one goes quiet when you ask how your logo survives shot 14.

Dim Kuzmenko
Founder, Maverick Frame Studio

maverickframe.com



START HERE

Every failure was visible before you signed

AI video projects rarely fail on the demo reel. Every studio has a few stunning clips. 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	"The AI keeps your product exact"	The logo is redrawn in every clip, the bottle changes shape and the colour drifts. The ad shows something you do not sell.
02	"It will feel like one film"	Each shot has different light, lenses and faces. The edit looks like a playlist of experiments, not a campaign.
03	"Nobody will notice it is AI"	Melting hands, floating cups and plastic skin in the first three seconds. Viewers stop trusting the brand before the message lands.
04	"We can do it without a shoot"	Without a shoot there is still no plan. Weeks go on prompting while the launch date stays where it was.
05	"Our team handles everything"	You get folders of clips but no script, no storyboard, no edit and nobody who answers for how the brand looks.

You are not choosing a demo reel. 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 AI video still.

THE TEST, PART ONE

Questions 1 to 6: the product, the plan, 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?	A brief with goal, audience, channels and runtime, plus product photos or a 3D model, the logo, the brand book and two references.	"Just send us a prompt."
2. How do you keep our product identical in every shot?	Every shot is anchored to approved reference frames of the real product, or to a 3D model of it, and drifting takes are rejected.	"The model is very good at products now."
3. Do we approve a script and a storyboard before anything is generated?	Yes: a script, then a shot-by-shot storyboard with timings, both signed off before the first still.	"We will generate options and see what works."
4. How do you lock the look across all shots?	One approved key still per shot fixes the cast, the light, the palette and the lens before animation starts.	"Each shot is generated fresh."
5. When would I see the first storyboard and the first stills, counted from a complete brief?	A number of working days for each, and what "complete" means.	"As soon as possible" or no number at all.
6. How many revision rounds are included, and what counts as one?	A fixed number at storyboard, at stills and at the edit, with a round defined as one consolidated list.	"Unlimited revisions."

Why questions 2 and 4 matter most

An AI clip is generated, not filmed, so nothing holds the product or the light still unless the studio does. Both answers tell you whether the film will look like one campaign or like twenty separate experiments.



Maverick Frame AI video still.

THE TEST, PART TWO

Questions 7 to 12: quality, edit, files

ASK THIS

A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

WALK AWAY IF

7. How long is each shot, and what do you do with a bad take?	Short shots of a few seconds, every frame checked, weak takes regenerated or cut, never kept to save time.	"The longer the clip, the better."
8. What do you do when AI cannot get a shot right?	Switch that shot to CGI or a composite, and say so before it costs a week.	"We keep prompting until it works."
9. Who edits, grades and titles the film?	An editor on the studio's own team who cuts to the storyboard and grades all shots to one look.	"We deliver the clips, you edit."
10. Which versions do you deliver for each channel?	A 16:9 master plus the 9:16, 1:1 and short cut-downs the campaign needs, agreed before the first shot.	"We send one file, you resize it."
11. Can stills for posters and banners come from the same shots?	Yes, from the approved key stills, so the campaign images match the film.	"That would be a separate job."
12. Who exactly will make the film, and is any part passed on?	Named roles on the studio's own team, or an honest "yes, the music" with the reason.	"Our network", a pause, or silence.

10 - 12

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

7 - 9

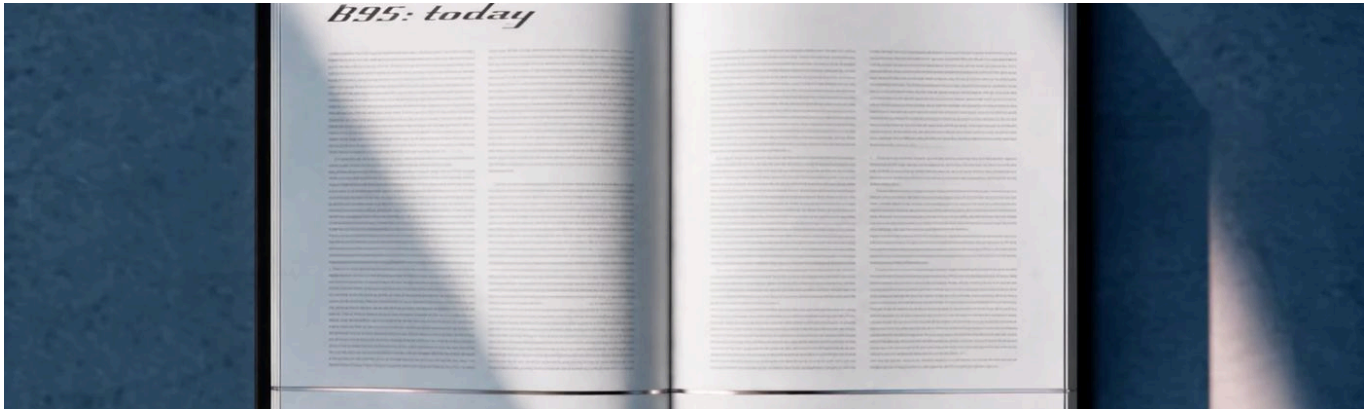
ASK FOR ONE PAID TEST SHOT BEFORE COMMITTING THE FILM

0 - 6

WALK AWAY, HOWEVER STRONG THE DEMO REEL LOOKS

The question studios dodge most often is number 12

Passing work on is common and not always bad. Hiding it is the problem, because you cannot fix a drifting logo or a missed launch date with a team you are not allowed to talk to. Ask it plainly and listen to how long the answer takes.



Maverick Frame AI video still.

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	AI video for [product or brand], quote and twelve questions
02	Line 1	We need [a brand film / an ad / product videos / a social series] of about [length] for [channels] by [date].
03	Line 2	Attached: the brief, product photos or a 3D model, the logo, the brand book and two references we like.
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 your product files and where the film will run.

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 AI video still.

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/
AI video work	maverickframe.com/services/ai-video-production/
Or simply	reply to the email this guide arrived in.

Written by the people who read these briefs

Dim Kuzmenko is the 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.