

FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Twelve Questions Before Your Renders Stop Looking Like You.

Ask them before you hand a project to any rendering studio. A partner worth your name answers all twelve in one email. The wrong one goes quiet around question three.

Dim Kuzmenko
Co-Founder, Maverick Frame Studio

maverickframe.com

START HERE

Every failure was visible before the model went out

Outsourced renders rarely fail on the portfolio. Every studio has a good one. They fail on the five things below, usually in the week of a submission or a client meeting, 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	**"Changes are no problem"**	The facade moves on Thursday, and the views are rebuilt from scratch at the price of new ones.
02	**"We will match your style"**	The images arrive in the vendor's look, and your client asks who made them.
03	**"We can start any time"**	The competition lands while they are full, and the board images arrive the night before submission.
04	**"Just send us the Revit file"**	Missing faces, grey default materials and empty rooms, and the clean-up is billed as an extra.
05	**"Happy to join the client call"**	The contractor now talks to your client directly, and the relationship is no longer only yours.

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 before your client sees a single view.



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THE TEST, PART ONE

Questions 1 to 6: the model and the changes

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. If our facade changes the week before the deadline, what does it cost and how long does it take?	The change is made in the same scene and re-rendered in hours or days, priced per view before work starts.	Every change quoted as a new render.
2. Do you keep one working scene per project, and can we have it?	One scene per project, archived after delivery, handed to your studio on request.	Only the final JPEGs exist after delivery.
3. Which native files do you open, and what must we fix before sending?	Revit, ArchiCAD, Rhino or SketchUp as they are. The studio lists the gaps and fixes them itself.	"Export it to OBJ and clean it up first."
4. How do you check the render against our drawings?	The model checked against plans and elevations, and a list of questions on what the drawings leave open.	"It will match."
5. Who adds furniture, planting, people and context, and how do we approve them?	The studio, to your specification or references, shown in a clay or draft view before final rendering.	Whatever is in their library, seen for the first time in the final.
6. How many revision rounds are included, and what counts as one?	Two at draft stage and one on the final, with a round defined as one consolidated list.	"Unlimited revisions". It means nobody has priced them.

Why question 1 protects your fee

Designs move until the last day, and your fee proposal cannot absorb a new render for every move. A studio that keeps one clean scene can re-render a revised facade for a fraction of the first view. One that rebuilds charges you again.



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THE TEST, PART TWO

Questions 7 to 12: style, capacity, your name

ASK THIS	A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE	WALK AWAY IF
7. How will you match our house style?	From your references: camera height, lens, colour grade and entourage, written into a style sheet kept for your studio.	"Clients love our signature look."
8. Will the next project look like this one?	The same style sheet and project manager, and the new draft checked against your last set.	"It depends who is free."
9. If a competition lands on top of two live projects, who works on it?	A team on the studio's own staff, one named project manager, and a start date counted from the day the model arrives.	One freelancer, "our network", or silence.
10. When would we see the first draft, and what if the submission date moves?	3 to 5 working days for a still from a complete brief, and a priced rush: about half the time for around 40% more.	"As soon as possible", or a rush with no price.
11. Whose name is on the images, and who talks to our client?	No watermark or credit, no contact with your client unless you ask, and invoices to your studio only.	A credit line in the image, or a wish to present to your client.
12. Do you sign our NDA before the files arrive, and can you publish the project?	Your NDA signed before the model is sent, and no portfolio use without your written permission.	Portfolio rights assumed by default.

10 - 12

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

7 - 9

ASK FOR ONE TEST VIEW ON A LIVE PROJECT BEFORE THE NEXT DEADLINE

0 - 6

WALK AWAY, HOWEVER STRONG THE PORTFOLIO LOOKS

The question studios dodge most often is number 11

White-label is easy to promise and easy to break: a signature in the corner, a direct email to your client, your project in their portfolio. Ask it in writing and listen to how specific the answer is.



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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**	Renders for [project type], quote and twelve questions
02	**Line 1**	We need [number] exterior and [number] interior views of [project] for [competition / client sign-off / planning], due [date].
03	**Line 2**	Attached: the [Revit / ArchiCAD / Rhino / SketchUp] model, plans and elevations, and three references from our own boards.
04	**Line 3**	The work is white-label under our studio's name. Our NDA is attached; please return it signed before opening the model.
05	**Line 4**	Paste questions 1 to 12 from pages 03 and 04.
06	**Line 5**	We will decide within [number] working days 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 model and the deadline.

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/
Studio rendering	maverickframe.com/solutions/3d-rendering-for-architecture-and-design-studios/
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.