



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Twelve Questions Before Your Listings Look Like Ten Brands.

Ask them before you sign an e-commerce rendering contract. A studio worth hiring answers all twelve in one email. The wrong one goes quiet around the question about colour matching.

START HERE

Every failure was visible before you signed

E-commerce rendering projects rarely fail on the look of the portfolio. Portfolios are good everywhere. 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 "Your new SKUs will be live in days"	The studio waits for samples it did not ask for. The new products sit in the store behind placeholder images.
02 "Colourways are easy for us"	Each colourway is quoted as a new render, so the range costs what a photo shoot would have.
03 "Marketplace-ready files"	Main images come back on off-white with shadows and props. Listings are suppressed until they are redone.
04 "One consistent look"	Three artists light the range three ways. The catalogue looks like ten brands on one category page.
05 "Photoreal materials"	The navy renders as black and the leather reads as plastic. Shoppers send the product back.

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: 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. What do you need to start, and do you need a sample of every colourway?	CAD or photos of one product, plus a swatch or a reference for each colour. Samples help, but they are not a condition to start.	"Send us every sample first".
2. When would I see the first SKU, counted from receiving the CAD?	A date: a first draft in 3 to 5 working days, then the look is locked on that SKU before the rest follow.	The first thing you see is the whole range.
3. What does each extra colourway cost once the product is modelled?	A fraction of the first: a material swap and a re-render of the same cameras, priced per colourway.	Every colourway priced as a new render.
4. What does a new colourway cost after launch, six months from now?	The same small fee, because the model and scene are archived and reopened.	"We would need to rebuild the product".
5. Which marketplaces have you delivered to, and to which image rules?	Named rules: pure white main image, product filling most of the frame, sizes per marketplace, files named by SKU.	"We deliver high-resolution JPGs" and nothing more.
6. How many revision rounds are included, and what counts as one?	Two at draft and one on the final, a round being one consolidated list of comments.	"Unlimited revisions". It means nobody has priced them.

Why question 3 matters most

A range of twelve products in four colours is forty-eight SKUs. If every colourway is a new render, the saving over photography disappears at the second colour. Ask for the price of the second colourway in writing, next to the price of the first.



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THE TEST, PART TWO

Questions 7 to 12: look, colour and files

ASK THIS

A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

WALK AWAY IF

7. How do you keep one look across the whole catalogue?	One lighting setup, one set of cameras and a written style guide, fixed on the first SKU and reused for every new one.	"Each artist has their own style".
8. Who exactly will model, light and render my products?	Named roles on the studio's own team, and who you will talk to day to day.	"Our partners", "our network", or silence.
9. How do you match colours and materials to the real product?	Against a physical sample or a colour reference, checked on close-ups before the full set is rendered.	"Our renders are photoreal" with no word on matching.
10. Can you match the photographs we already have?	Yes: they study your live listings and match light, angle and background, so rendered and photographed SKUs sit side by side.	They want to restyle the whole store first.
11. Who keeps the models, and can we get GLB or USDZ files for AR?	The studio archives the scenes, and the same model can be exported for 3D viewers and AR.	Only the rendered images exist after delivery.
12. How are files named and delivered?	By SKU and angle, in the sizes and formats of each channel, in one folder per product.	Hundreds of files named render_final_v3.

10 - 12

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

7 - 9

ASK FOR ONE PAID TEST SKU BEFORE COMMITTING THE RANGE

0 - 6

WALK AWAY, HOWEVER STRONG THE PORTFOLIO LOOKS

The question studios dodge most often is number 9

Colour is where renders earn returns or lose them. A studio that matches to a sample says so at once and tells you what it needs from you. One that talks about photorealism instead has not thought about your returns.



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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	E-commerce renders for [range], quote and twelve questions
02	Line 1	We need [number] images per SKU for [number] products in [number] colourways, for [our store / Amazon / other marketplaces], live by [date].
03	Line 2	Attached: CAD or photos, the colourway list and two listings 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, price the first and the second colourway separately, name the people and ask which marketplaces you sell on.

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/
E-commerce rendering	maverickframe.com/solutions/3d-rendering-for-e-commerce/
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.