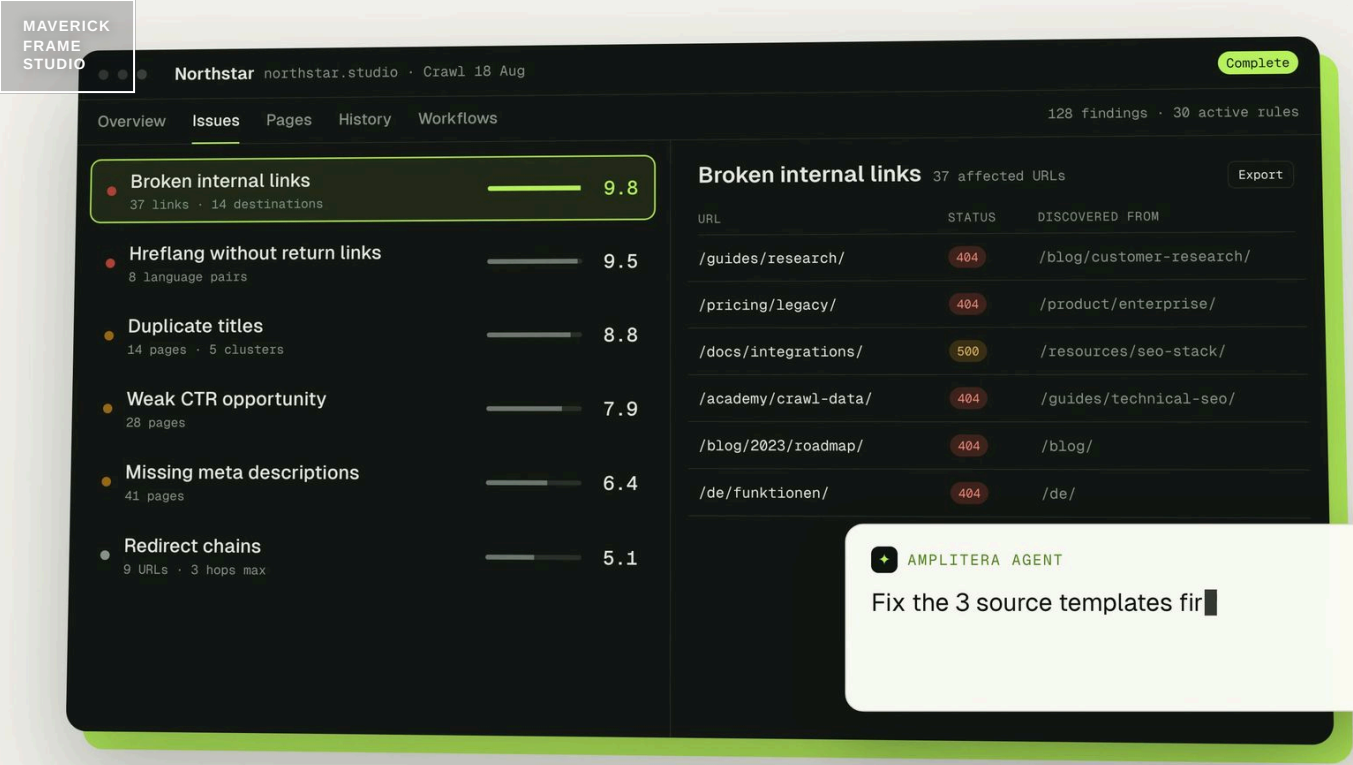


Start with the cause. *See every page it touches.*



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Twelve Questions Before Your Explainer Goes Into Production.

Ask them before you sign an explainer video contract. A studio worth hiring answers all twelve in one email. The wrong one goes quiet when you ask how it keeps the film true to your product.

START HERE

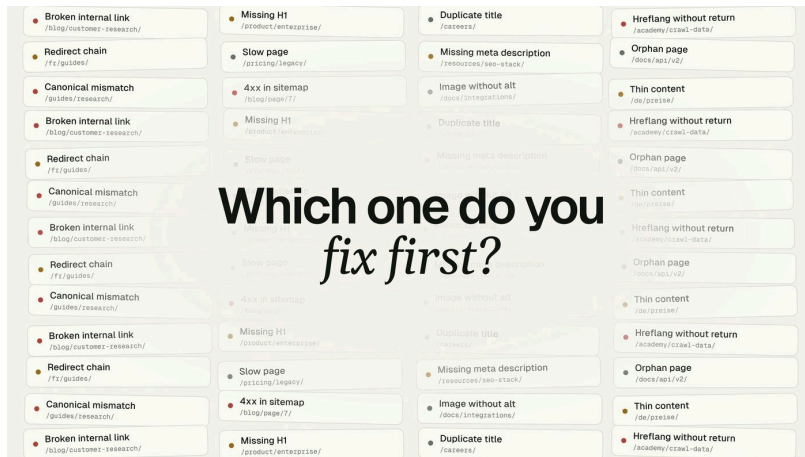
Every failure was visible before you signed

Explainer projects rarely fail on the style frame. A clean animated dashboard is in every showreel. 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	"We know SaaS"	The film shows a generic dashboard and a stock character, and your own product appears for three seconds at the end.
02	"The script is easy"	The script lists every feature, runs past two minutes and nobody remembers what the product does.
03	"We will show the vision"	The film promises features from the roadmap, and the first demo call has to walk them back.
04	"Edits are simple"	The interface changes after the next release, and the film was cut from screen recordings, so it is made again from zero.
05	"We'll have it ready"	The film arrives after the launch, the conference or the investor meeting. None of those dates moves for a late video.

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

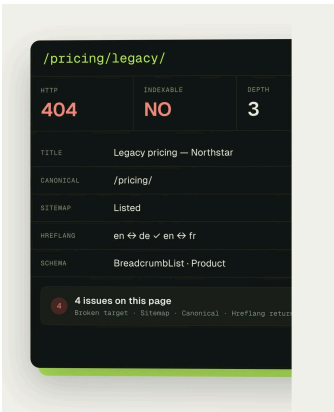
Questions 1 to 6: the product, the script, the date

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?	Product access or a demo, documentation, brand files, the audience and the goal of the film.	"Just send us a logo and a few bullet points."
2. Will the film show our real interface?	Your screens rebuilt in motion, with demo data instead of customer data.	"We use our own UI kit, it looks similar."
3. Who writes the script, and from what?	The studio drafts it from your documentation, and you approve it before anything is animated.	"We start animating and fix the story later."
4. When would I see the first style frames, counted from a complete brief?	A number of working days, and what "complete" means.	"As soon as possible" or no number at all.
5. What happens if the launch date 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

An explainer is judged by people who will use the real product. A prospect compares it with the demo, a customer with the app and an investor with the deck. Both questions are decided by how the studio treats your product before it starts.



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THE TEST, PART TWO

Questions 7 to 12: style, sound, formats, files

ASK THIS

A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

WALK AWAY IF

7. Do you work in 2D motion graphics, 3D or both?	Both, with a clear reason why one fits your product, and examples of each.	One style for every product, whatever it is.
8. How do you handle viewers who watch with the sound off?	On-screen lines and sound design carry the story; a voice-over and captions are added where the channel needs them.	"The voice-over explains everything."
9. How do you keep the film from going out of date?	Scenes built to be edited, so a new screen or feature is an update, priced up front.	A new project for every product change.
10. Which versions do you deliver for the website, social media and ads?	The master film, launch cuts, vertical and square versions, agreed before animation starts.	"We send one MP4, you crop it."
11. How do you check every claim in the film?	Against your documentation, with features that are not live yet left out.	"Marketing can always add a little."
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 access is shared, nothing published without approval.	"Our network", a pause, or silence.

10 - 12

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

7 - 9

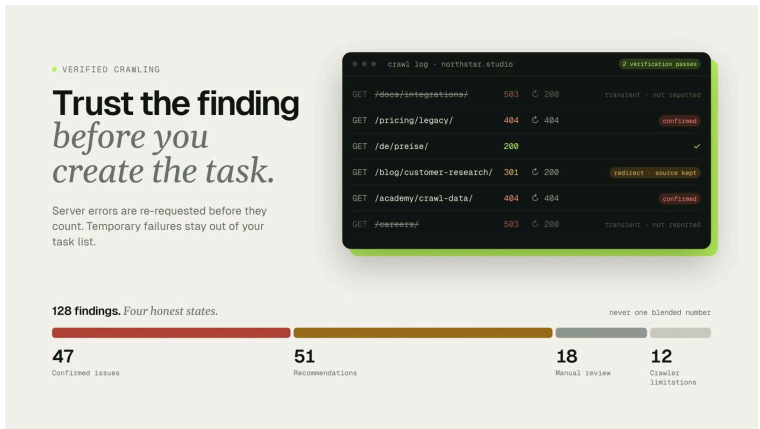
ASK FOR PAID STYLE FRAMES BEFORE
COMMITTING THE FILM

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 product should not travel to people you never signed an NDA with, and a wrong claim cannot be fixed by a team you are not allowed to talk to.



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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	Explainer video for [product], quote and twelve questions
02	Line 1	We need a [length] [explainer / product demo / launch video] for [the homepage / the launch / sales calls / investors] by [date].
03	Line 2	Attached, or after you sign our NDA: product access or a demo, documentation, brand files and two films 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, name the people, offer an NDA and ask you one or two questions back about the audience, 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/
Explainer video work	maverickframe.com/services/explainer-video-production/
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.