



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Twelve Questions Before the Build-Out Locks the Layout.

Ask them before you sign with a restaurant design or visualization studio. A studio worth hiring answers all twelve in one email. The wrong one goes quiet when you ask whose furniture is in the floor plan.

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START HERE

Every failure was visible before you signed

Restaurant projects rarely fail on the portfolio. Every studio has a glowing bar and a candlelit dining room. 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 AFTER YOU SIGN
01 "Send us the design and we render it"	You have an empty unit, not a design. Nobody on the team owns the concept, so the renders wait for decisions no one is making.
02 "Nice images for the business plan"	The bank asks how many covers the room seats and why the concept fits the street. The images show a mood, not a business.
03 "The supplier did a free floor plan"	The layout is built around one supplier's chairs and catalogue. Seating, service paths and the bar come second.
04 "The landlord will understand the plans"	The landlord, the contractor and the permit office each read a different drawing, and each finds a different problem.
05 "We'll photograph the restaurant when it opens"	Hiring, delivery apps and the coming-soon campaign start weeks before the doors open. There is nothing to photograph, so the launch goes out with stock images.

You are not choosing a portfolio. You are choosing who decides the design.

The twelve questions on the next two pages test exactly that. Each one maps to one of the failures above, and each has an answer you can check.



Maverick Frame restaurant design renders: a 3D restaurant floor plan and a cafe dining room.



THE TEST, PART ONE

Questions 1 to 6: design and layout

Send these as they are. You are not looking for enthusiasm; you are looking for names, files and working days. Vague answers are an answer too.

ASK THIS	A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE	WALK AWAY IF
1. I have a unit and a budget, not a design. Who develops the concept?	"We do": the concept, the floor plan, materials and a first look at the dining room, reviewed with you before any final render.	"Send us your designer's drawings."
2. How do you plan seating and service at the dinner rush?	Covers, table mix, bar access and service paths turned into a 3D layout you can walk through.	"We place the tables where they look good."
3. Whose furniture and equipment is in the layout?	Brand-neutral by default, or your chosen supplier's models from their catalogue or CAD.	Only one brand, and no reason why.
4. Can you design the bar, the storefront and the terrace too?	The bar, the facade, the signage and the outdoor seating inside the same model, not as separate jobs.	"The exterior is someone else's problem."
5. What will you need from my architect, and what do you not do?	A clear split: we design and visualize; your architect issues construction and permit drawings, and a kitchen consultant plans the kitchen.	"We do everything", including stamped drawings.
6. How many design rounds before the final renders?	A number, what counts as one round, and when changes start to cost extra.	"Unlimited" or no number.

Questions 1 and 3 decide most projects

If nobody owns the concept, every render waits for a decision. If the floor plan belongs to one supplier, you are buying their chairs before you have chosen them. Get both answers in writing.



Maverick Frame restaurant design renders: a cafe counter and a storefront.

THE TEST, PART TWO

Questions 7 to 12: money, launch, team

ASK THIS	A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE	WALK AWAY IF
7. Which views go into the business plan and the investor deck?	The storefront, the dining room and the bar: the views that make the plan believable to a lender.	"Whatever looks best."
8. What do the landlord and the contractor get?	Storefront, signage and layout views from the same model, with dimensions the contractor can price.	Pretty images with no plan behind them.
9. Can we start marketing before the restaurant is built?	Social media posts, ad creatives, a coming-soon campaign and a short promo video, made from the design model.	"Wait for the photoshoot."
10. When would I see the first layout and the first render, counted from a complete brief?	A number of working days for each, and what "complete" means.	"As soon as possible" or no number.
11. What happens when the design changes after approval?	The model is updated, not rebuilt, and you know the price of a change before it is made.	"We start the scene again."
12. Who exactly will work on my restaurant, and is any part passed on?	Named roles on the studio's own team, or an honest "yes, the animation" with the reason.	"Our network", a pause, or silence.

10 - 12

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

7 - 9

ASK FOR A PAID CONCEPT VIEW BEFORE COMMITTING THE FULL SET

0 - 6

WALK AWAY, HOWEVER STRONG THE PORTFOLIO 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 nobody can fix a layout your landlord rejected with a team you are not allowed to talk to. Ask it plainly and listen to how long the answer takes.



Maverick Frame restaurant design renders: a set table and a hotel restaurant bar.

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

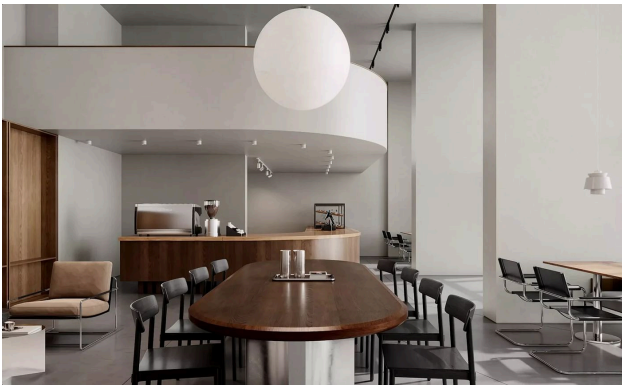
01	Subject	Restaurant design and visualization for [restaurant name or address], quote and twelve questions
02	Line 1	We are opening a [restaurant / cafe / bar] of about [area] in [city] and need [a concept and layout / renders / a launch package] by [date].
03	Line 2	Attached: the unit plan, photos of the space, our menu idea and number of covers, any furniture quote and references we like.
04	Line 3	Please answer the twelve questions below with names and working days, 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, say who designs the concept, and ask you one or two questions back about your guests, your budget and your opening 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 restaurant design renders: a communal table and an arched dining room.

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 the unit and the idea

A unit plan, photos of the empty space, a business plan draft or just a few lines about the restaurant you want to open, in whatever state. We reply with a scope, a price and the questions that decide them, in writing and without a sales call.

The contact form	maverickframe.com/contacts/
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Restaurant design and visualization	maverickframe.com/solutions/restaurant-design/
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Or simply	reply to the email this guide arrived in.
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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.