



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Twelve Questions Before the Fit-Out Locks the Layout.

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

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START HERE

Every failure was visible before you signed

Store projects rarely fail on the portfolio. Every studio has a glowing boutique and a marble counter. 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 and a brand book, not a design. Nobody on the team owns the store concept, so the renders wait for decisions no one is making.
02 "Nice images for the business plan"	The bank asks how the store sells and why the concept fits the street. The images show a mood, not a business.
03 "The fixture supplier did a free layout"	The layout is built around one supplier's shelving and catalogue. The customer path, the fitting rooms and the brand come second.
04 "The mall will understand the plans"	The landlord, the mall's tenant coordinator and the shopfitter each read a different drawing, and each finds a different problem.
05 "We'll photograph the store when it opens"	The opening campaign, the window teaser and the social posts 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 store.

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 retail design renders: a store layout from above and a fashion boutique.

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 brand book, not a design. Who develops the store concept?	"We do": the concept, the layout, materials, fixtures and a first look at the sales floor, reviewed with you before any final render.	"Send us your designer's drawings."
2. How do you plan the customer path, the zones and the till?	Entrance, zones, fitting rooms, the cash wrap and the stock room turned into a 3D layout you can walk through.	"We place the fixtures where they look good."
3. Whose fixtures and displays are in the layout?	Brand-neutral by default, or your chosen shopfitter's or display maker's units from their CAD files.	Only one supplier, and no reason why.
4. Can you design the storefront, the signage and the windows too?	The facade, the sign, the window displays and the interior inside the same model, not as separate jobs.	"The exterior is someone else's problem."
5. What will you need from my architect or shopfitter, and what do you not do?	A clear split: we design and visualize; your architect or shopfitter issues construction drawings and the permit set.	"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 layout belongs to one supplier, you are buying their shelving before you have chosen it. Get both answers in writing.



Maverick Frame retail design renders: a storefront and a cosmetics counter.

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 sales floor and the hero display: the views that make the plan believable to a bank or a franchise partner.

"Whatever looks best."

8. What do the landlord, the mall and the shopfitter get?

Storefront, signage and layout views from the same model, rendered to the mall's design criteria, with dimensions the shopfitter can price.

Pretty images with no plan behind them.

9. Can we start marketing before the store is built?

Social media posts, ad creatives, a window teaser 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 store, 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

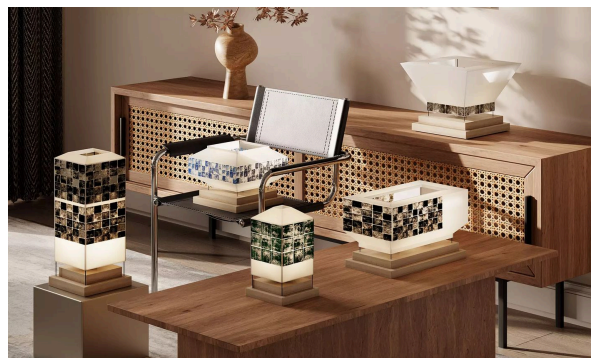
WALK AWAY, HOWEVER STRONG THE PORTFOLIO
LOOKS

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 storefront 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 retail design renders: a pop-up display island and a lighting showroom setting.



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	Retail store design and visualization for [store name or address], quote and twelve questions
02	Line 1	We are opening a [boutique / flagship store / showroom / pop-up] of about [area] in [city or mall] and need [a concept and layout / renders / a launch package] by [date].
03	Line 2	Attached: the unit plan, photos of the space, our brand guidelines, the mall's design criteria if any, and stores 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 customers, 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 retail design renders: a fashion store and a brand display stand.

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 brand

A unit plan, photos of the empty space, your brand guidelines or just a few lines about the store 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/
Retail store design and visualization	maverickframe.com/solutions/retail-design/
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.