



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Twelve Questions Before the Panels Look Pasted On.

Ask them before you sign a solar rendering contract. A studio worth hiring answers all twelve in one email. The wrong one goes quiet when you ask how it matches the roof pitch.

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START HERE

Every failure was visible before you signed

Solar rendering projects rarely fail on image quality. Sunny roofs and blue skies are in every portfolio. 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 "Photoreal panels, of course"	The array is pasted flat onto the photo, at the wrong angle and with no reflections. The homeowner sees a sticker, not a roof, and the proposal loses trust.
02 "We follow your layout"	Modules are redrawn by eye. The count changes, setbacks disappear and the array covers a vent, so the image no longer matches the quote.
03 "Any photo will do"	A phone shot from the wrong spot is used as it is. The roof that matters is half hidden, and the association still cannot see what the neighbours will see.
04 "Every house is easy"	Dormers, hips and bay windows break the standard template, and each new unit type is quoted as a new project.
05 "Changes are no problem"	The layout changes after the site survey, and the scene lives with someone else. The revised image arrives after the board meeting.

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: the photo, the layout, 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 render the panels on this home?	Photos from where people will see the roof, the panel layout or a design export with module size and count, and the panel model.	"Just send the address, we'll find it on a map."
2. How do you match the array to the real roof in the photo?	The camera is matched to the photo and the roof plane rebuilt in 3D, so pitch, size, shadows and reflections follow the real roof.	"We place the panels in Photoshop."
3. Will the array follow our layout exactly?	Module count, rows, setbacks and orientation taken from your layout, with any change agreed with you first.	"Close enough, nobody counts panels."
4. When would I see the first draft, counted from a complete brief?	A number of working days, 3 to 5 for a still, 2 to 3 weeks for a set of 5 to 8 views, and what "complete" means.	"As soon as possible" or no number at all.
5. What happens if the association meeting moves forward by a week?	A rush option with a price, roughly half the time for around 40% more.	"We'll make it work" with no price attached.
6. How many revision rounds are included, and what counts as one?	A fixed number, typically two at draft and one on the final, with a round defined as one consolidated list.	"Unlimited revisions."

Why questions 2 and 3 matter most

A solar contract is signed from the image and installed from the layout. If the render shows a different array than the one you quoted, the complaint lands on your crew, not on the studio. Both are decided by what the studio asks for, and promises to keep, before it starts.



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THE TEST, PART TWO

Questions 7 to 12: views, roofs, files

ASK THIS

A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

WALK AWAY IF

7. Which views do you recommend for an association or permit?

Street, path and aerial views from fixed points, at real size, plus a before-and-after pair from the same camera.

"One nice hero shot is enough."

8. How do you price other homes or unit types in the same project?

A price per new camera or unit type on a scene already built, far below the first home.

Every home quoted as a new project.

9. How do you handle dormers, hips, chimneys and vents?

The array is laid on the clear roof plane and kept off valleys, vents and edges, as on your layout.

"We use our standard roof."

10. Which formats do you deliver for proposals, print and social?

Proposal and email sizes, print resolution, web files and social crops, agreed before cameras are framed.

"We send JPEGs, you resize them."

11. Can a flyover or a solar farm photomontage come from the same scene?

Yes, with a camera path or agreed viewpoints before rendering, and the length or viewpoint count stated up front.

"We'd bring in a partner for that."

12. Who exactly will model and render the project, and is any part passed on?

Named roles on the studio's own team, or an honest "yes, the aerial survey" with the reason.

"Our network", a pause, or silence.

10 - 12

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

7 - 9

ASK FOR ONE PAID TEST VIEW BEFORE COMMITTING THE SET

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, because you cannot fix a wrong module count or a missed board date with a team you are not allowed to talk to. Ask it plainly and listen to how long the answer takes.



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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	Solar renders for [home, community or site], quote and twelve questions
02	Line 1	We need [number] views of [a customer's home / a townhouse community / a commercial roof / a solar farm] for [the proposal / the association / the permit / planning / marketing] by [date].
03	Line 2	Attached: photos of the home or site, the panel layout or design export, the panel model and two references.
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, name the people, and ask you one or two questions back about the photos and the layout.

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/
Solar work	maverickframe.com/solutions/solar-rendering/
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.