



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

The **8 Decisions** Before You Commission

The eight things you have to settle on your own side before a brief can be written, what each one changes in the quote, and a one-page record to sign off.

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A brief answers questions. Someone has to ask them.

A first brief almost always describes the building. Plans, elevations, a mood board, a sentence about the architecture. That part is usually fine. What is missing is everything about your own side of the job — and that is the part which sets the price, the schedule and whether the images turn out to be the ones you needed.

Eight decisions. None of them require any knowledge of 3D. All of them are yours to make, and all of them are cheaper to make now than in week three.

What a first brief usually contains

- Drawings, at whatever stage they happen to be
- References, usually from other people's projects
- A number of images, chosen because it sounded right
- A deadline, taken from a meeting date

What it usually leaves out

- What the images are actually **for**
- Who has the authority to approve them
- Which parts have to be literally accurate
- Where they will be published, and at what size
- What happens to the model when the job ends

A studio can guess at every item in the right-hand column, and a good one will guess sensibly. But a guess that is wrong is discovered at the review, which is the most expensive place to discover anything. **The eight decisions exist so that nothing in that column has to be guessed.**



Maverick Frame production render.

DECISIONS 01 – 04

The four that set the shape of the job

Answer these before you ask anyone for a price. Each one forks the work down a different route, and the routes are not interchangeable later.

01 What are these images for?

Sales, planning, investment, competition, a website, a hoarding. Pick **one** primary purpose. A sales image flatters and simplifies; a planning image has to be defensible; an investor image has to show scale and context rather than cushions. One image can serve a second purpose adequately. It cannot serve two purposes well.

02 Who approves them, and how many people is that?

Name the person who can say yes. If the answer is a committee, say so at the briefing stage and agree how their comments are collected into one voice. Contradictory feedback from three directions is the most reliable way to burn a budget without improving an image.

03 Stills, motion, or both?

Decide now, not after the stills are approved. Building a scene that will later carry a camera move is a different job from building one that only ever faces one way — more of the model has to exist, and the materials have to hold up from angles the stills never show. Adding motion afterwards means rebuilding.

04 How much real context do you need?

Three levels, three prices. An abstract or invented setting is cheapest. A modelled but generic neighbourhood is middle. A true site with the actual surrounding buildings, from survey or photography, is the most expensive and the only one that answers the question “what will this really look like from the street.”

If you only settle one of these

Settle the first. Purpose decides framing, light, level of finish, how many people are in the picture and whether the sky is dramatic or neutral. Almost every argument at a first review turns out, on inspection, to be two people holding different answers to question 01.

DECISIONS 05 – 08

The four that set the price

05 What has to be exact, and what can be interpreted?

Write two short lists. Exact might be the facade module, the window proportions, a specified cladding, the site boundary. Interpreted might be planting, furniture, cars, sky, people. Without this split a studio treats everything as approximate, or everything as fixed. Both are wrong and both cost money.

06 What sizes and formats do you actually need?

Name the largest print you will ever make from these images and the platforms they will be posted to. Resolution is decided at render time and is expensive to change afterwards. Check the current specification with the platform or printer yourself — those figures move, and a number copied from a blog post is a number you will regret.

07 What rights do you need, and for how long?

Who may use the images, where, for how long, and may your partners, agents and press use them too. Put the wording in front of your own adviser rather than accepting a description of it. The failure case is not dramatic: it is an agent or a portal that turns out not to be covered, eighteen months after anyone remembers the conversation.

08 Who ends up with the model?

Distinct from the images, and the more valuable of the two. If you expect a second phase, a new angle next year or a different studio later, the model is what makes that cheap. Decide whether you are buying it, licensing it, or leaving it with the studio with a written right to ask for it back.

What each decision moves in the quote

01	Purpose	Level of finish, number of images, and whether anything has to be defensible.
02	Approver	Number of review rounds, which is usually the single largest variable in the whole job.
03	Stills or motion	How much of the model must be built, and to what standard.
04	Context	Modelling hours, and whether photography or survey data is needed.
05	Exact vs interpreted	Detail hours, and how much gets rebuilt when the drawings change.
06	Sizes and formats	Render time, and the cost of any later re-issue at a bigger size.
07	Rights	Licence fee, and the cost of extending it after the fact.
08	Model ownership	The price of everything you commission from this project after this project.

THE RECORD

One page, filled in, attached to the brief

Print this, complete it, and send it as the first attachment. It takes about ten minutes and it is the difference between a quote you can compare and a quote you have to interpret.

- | | |
|----|---|
| 01 | PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE IMAGES (ONE) |
| 02 | NAME OF THE PERSON WHO APPROVES / HOW COMMENTS ARE COLLECTED |
| 03 | STILLS ONLY / STILLS NOW AND MOTION LATER / BOTH FROM THE START |
| 04 | CONTEXT: INVENTED / GENERIC / TRUE SITE (AND WHAT SUPPLIES IT) |
| 05 | MUST BE EXACT |
| 05 | MAY BE INTERPRETED |
| 06 | LARGEST PRINT / PLATFORMS / FILE FORMATS REQUIRED |
| 07 | WHO MAY USE THEM, WHERE, FOR HOW LONG |
| 08 | MODEL: PURCHASED / LICENSED / HELD BY STUDIO, RECALLABLE |

Then keep the brief itself short

With this page attached, the brief needs four things: how many images and of what, the drawings as they are, a few references for mood and light, and one line on the goal. Resist the urge to write a specification. Over-specified small jobs come out worse, because a studio taking every clause literally stops making the judgements you are paying for.

And decide the ninth thing too

When. Not the deadline — the date you start looking. The most damaging mistake we see is not a bad choice of studio. It is beginning the search after another supplier has already failed, with the meeting a week away and no leverage left. Have someone vetted before you need them.

WORKING WITH A STUDIO

Cost, and how to brief it

Two things people ask us before anything else. Both answers are short.

COMMISSIONED WORK	FREELANCER	STUDIO
Single exterior still	\$100 – 300	\$250 – 600
Single interior still	\$120 – 350	\$300 – 700
Package, 5–8 views	\$600 – 1,500	\$1,500 – 4,000
Animation, per minute	\$1,000 – 3,000	\$3,000 – 8,000

Market ranges we are willing to publish. Turnaround and revision-round figures are deliberately not in this table: ours vary too much by project type to state as a benchmark, and an invented number here would be worse than none.

How to brief it — shorter is better

This is the opposite of what most people assume. Four things:

- What you need — **how many images, and of what**
- The plans and elevations, as they are
- A few reference images for mood and light
- One clear line on what the images are *for*

Inflating a small job into a fifty-page specification backfires: taken literally it comes out ugly, and it misleads the people doing the work. Tell them the intent and let the team that does this daily handle the detail.

The mistake that costs the most

The biggest failure we see is not choosing the wrong vendor. It is **timing**. People start looking only after the first supplier has already failed and the deadline is on fire, then choose in a panic.

Line up and vet rendering partners **before** you need one. One, ideally a few, briefed and ready to take work. It costs an afternoon now and saves a project later.

10+

YEARS RENDERING
VISUAL STORYTELLING

350+

BRANDS & AGENCIES
EMPOWERED GLOBALLY

95%

CLIENT
SATISFACTION RATE

40%+

OF OUR COMMISSIONS NOW
INCLUDE MOTION OR 360

When the image has to hold up, **talk to us**

We are a CGI studio: architectural and product rendering, 3D modelling, animation, 360 tours and VR. Ten years, 350+ brands and agencies, and the kind of work that still looks right when somebody counts the windows.

Send us the plans and a line on what the images are for. You get a scope and a price, and no obligation to use either.

START HERE

maverickframe.com/contacts

SEE THE WORK

maverickframe.com/gallery

WRITTEN BY

Dim Kuzmenko

Founder



Maverick Frame production render. · Cost ranges are market ranges as of 2026 and are not a quotation.