



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Going **Offshore**: What It Costs You

An even-handed ledger of what an offshore CGI supplier genuinely saves and genuinely costs, then the control protocol for working with a studio you will never visit.

START HERE

It is a trade, not a discount

The pitch for offshore is a smaller number on the quote, and the number is usually real. What it buys is a different distribution of effort: less of it inside the studio price, more of it inside your own week. The useful question is not whether offshore is good. It is whether that trade suits *this* job.

What it genuinely gives you

- A materially lower rate per image, often by a wide margin
- Capacity — a real team available at short notice
- Willingness to take volume work a boutique will decline
- Technical skill that is not in short supply anywhere
- In the right pairing, an overnight cycle that works for you

What it genuinely costs you

- Your own management time, which is rarely counted
- A brief that has to be complete, because gaps get assumed
- Latency — a question can cost a day, three in sequence cost three
- A weaker read of the market you are selling into
- Nobody who can go and stand on the site

Both columns are true at the same time. A guide that prints only one of them is selling something. The skill in buying offshore is not finding the cheapest supplier — it is knowing which of the five costs above actually bites on the job in front of you, and covering those.

One in-house artist needs around ten software subscriptions, a workstation, and a stack of adjacent skills. In-house only pays off at a headcount that keeps that person busy every day.

DIM KUZMENKO, CO-FOUNDER, MAVERICK FRAME STUDIO

Worth remembering, because the real comparison is almost never two-way. It is offshore against a local studio against bringing it in-house, and the third option is the one most often costed optimistically.

STEP 01

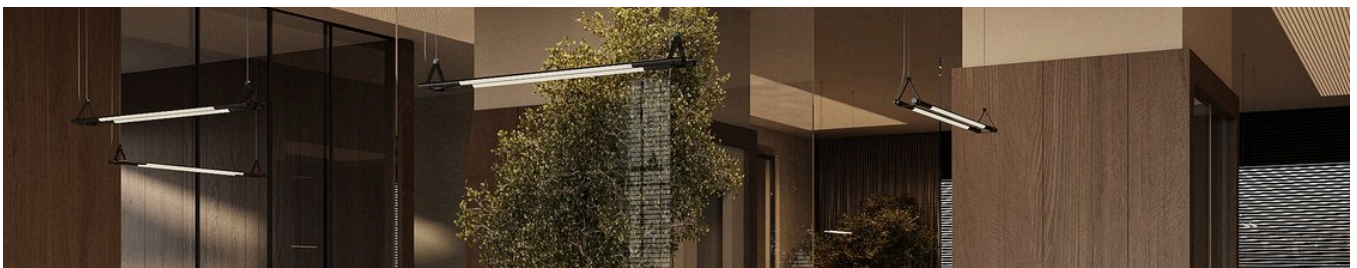
The five costs, and what each one is worth

Price them individually. Each has a mitigation, and each mitigation has a cost of its own, usually paid in your time rather than your budget. If the saving survives this table, offshore is the right call and you can stop worrying about it.

COST	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE	MITIGATION
Review cycles	More rounds, because the first attempt starts further from what you meant. Each round is cheap; the calendar is not.	A paid trial job, and a geometry gate before anything is lit. See page 04.
Brief quality	Whatever is not written down gets assumed, by somebody who cannot lean over and ask you.	Require a written assumptions log back before modelling starts.
Latency	A question asked at 4pm is answered tomorrow. Three questions that depend on each other take three days.	One batched comment round at a fixed hour each day. Never dribble comments out as you think of them.
Market reading	Cars, planting, how people dress, what “premium” looks like where you are selling. This is the cost people underestimate most.	Send a reference pack from your own market, and say plainly that it is the target, not inspiration.
Site access	Nobody is flying out to photograph your plot, check a neighbouring facade, or confirm what is actually built next door.	Decide who shoots, to a written specification, and who pays if the light is wrong and it has to be redone.

The cost nobody writes down

Your own hours. Count the time you will spend writing the brief properly, consolidating comments, checking deliveries and chasing, and price it at what your time actually costs. Put that figure next to the saving. It decides a large share of these comparisons honestly, and it almost never appears in the spreadsheet where the decision gets made.



Maverick Frame production render.

STEP 02

The protocol for a studio you cannot visit

Six gates. Each is cheap to fail and expensive to skip, and together they are the difference between managing a supplier and hoping about one. None of them requires you to be in the same country, or the same hemisphere.

01 Buy a trial job. Pay for it.

One image, on a real project, at a real price. A free test gets made by whoever happens to be free, with nobody accountable for it, and it tells you nothing about how the studio behaves under a deadline.

02 Require a written assumptions log before modelling

Every decision they had to make because the drawings did not say. You approve or correct it. This single document removes most of the cost in the second row of page 03, and any studio that resists producing it has told you something useful.

03 Approve untextured geometry before anything is lit

Grey, unlit, correct: massing, openings, floor levels, camera positions. Approve it in that state. After lighting and materials are done, a moved window is not an edit, it is the image again.

04 One look test per set

Carry a single view through to final quality and approve the light and materials on that one. Everything else follows it. Approving eight views individually is how a set ends up not matching.

05 Fix the daily exchange point in writing

A stated hour when work lands and a stated hour when comments go back, both named in the email that confirms the job. Without it, the time difference is a cost instead of an advantage.

06 Tie payment to the gates

Trial, geometry approval, final delivery. Not everything in advance, and not everything at the end. This is normal commercial practice and a serious studio will expect it.

What the trial is actually testing

Not whether they can render. Almost everyone can render. You are testing whether they **ask questions**, whether they read the drawings rather than glancing at them, whether they say so when something is missing instead of inventing it — and whether the second version answers what you actually wrote. That last one predicts the rest of the project better than any portfolio.

STEP 03

First delivery, and the terms

Two things ready before the first files arrive: what you inspect, and what you already agreed. Neither takes long. Both are close to impossible to fix afterwards.

Inspect the first delivery yourself

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Open every file on your own machine before approving anything | ☐ Ground meets the building where the section says it does |
| ☐ Textures supplied as linked files, not still sitting on their server | ☐ Same light and camera across images meant to sit together |
| ☐ Resolution and aspect as specified, and not upscaled to get there | ☐ At 100%: fringing, halos, doubled lines from cut-out people |
| ☐ Count things against the drawings: storeys, bays, windows, steps | ☐ Cars, planting and people that belong in your market |
| ☐ North point and sun direction consistent right across the set | ☐ Layered or element files you were promised, present and named |

COMMERCIAL

Contract currency _____ Who carries FX movement _____
 Tax on a service bought abroad -> ask your own accountant
 Milestones: trial _____ geometry _____ final _____
 Transfer costs paid by _____

FILES AND RIGHTS

Do we receive the model, or only the images? _____
 Formats: native _____ exchange _____
 Textures as linked files _____ Parts named _____
 May we hand the files to another studio? _____
 Licence: where the images may be used, how long _____
 May they publish the work, and from when? _____
 NDA signed _____ Files stored where _____

WORKING

Daily exchange hour, their time _____ / your time _____
 Named contact _____
 Public holidays and shutdown dates _____

Offshore is a trade. Run it as a trade — gates, written assumptions, one comment round, terms agreed before the first invoice — and it is frequently a very good one. Run it as a discount and you pay the difference back out of your own week, at your own rate, without ever seeing it on an invoice.

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



MAVERICK
FRAME
STUDIO

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

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

