

FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

What Your Practice's Stack Actually Hands Over

Which formats each part of an architectural stack exports, what survives the export, what quietly does not, and the one-page handover a visualisation studio can work from immediately.

Dim Kuzmenko
Co-Founder, Maverick Frame Studio

maverickframe.com

START HERE

A stack is judged by its exports

We are not going to tell you which software to buy. We do not sell software, we have no view on your licensing, and the honest answer is that the model you already have is nearly always good enough. What we can tell you is what arrives at our end when you press export — because that is the part of your stack a visualisation studio actually meets.

Two practices can run identical software and produce handovers that differ by days of work. The difference is never the tool. It is what was named, where the model sits in space, and which of the things you can see on your screen actually travelled with the file.

Cheap handover

One model, named layers, real units, a sensible origin, and a note saying which drawing is current. Work starts the same day it arrives.

Expensive handover

Four exports at different dates, layers called Layer1, the site 40 km from the origin, and a PDF set that disagrees with the model.

The gap

Days, not hours — and it is billed to you, because somebody has to reconcile the two before anything can be modelled.

> *One in-house 3D artist needs around ten software subscriptions, a workstation and a stack of adjacent skills. In-house pays off only at a headcount that keeps that person busy daily.*
>
> DIM KUZMENKO, CO-FOUNDER, MAVERICK FRAME STUDIO

Which is why most practices are better off spending their attention on the handover than on the render stack. The handover is the part you control, it costs nothing to improve, and it changes the price of every visualisation job you ever commission.



Maverick Frame production render.

STEP 01

What each part of the stack sends out

Grouped by what the tool is for, not by brand. Every practice has some version of each row, and each row hands over differently.

PART OF THE STACK	USUALLY EXPORTS	WHAT IT MEANS AT OUR END
BIM authoring Revit, ArchiCAD, Vectorworks	IFC, DWG, FBX, and native	Rich and heavy. Everything is there, including things nobody needs in a render. Export a filtered view, not the whole model.
Surface and concept modelling Rhino, SketchUp, Blender	3DM, SKP, OBJ, FBX, DAE	Light and clean, and usually the fastest thing to work from. Curved surfaces become meshes on export — the tessellation setting matters.
2D drafting AutoCAD and equivalents	DWG, DXF, PDF	Still the most reliable source for plans and elevations, if layers are named and the file is purged.
In-house viz and real-time Enscape, Twinmotion, Lumion	Images, video, and sometimes a scene	Useful as a reference for intent. Their materials rarely travel, so treat their output as a mood board, not as a source.
Site and survey	Point clouds, DWG contours, GIS data	The single most valuable extra you can send. A real topography saves guesswork that otherwise shows in every exterior image.
Product and FF&E data	Manufacturer 3D files, spec sheets	Send what exists. A specified light fitting modelled from a photograph is a day of work and still wrong.
Document management	PDF sets, issue sheets	The version you mark as current is what we build. Without it, we pick, and picking is where rework comes from.

The two exports to send together

A 3D model in a neutral format the whole industry opens, **and** the current 2D set as PDF. The model gives us the geometry; the PDF gives us the intent, the dimensions and the annotations that never survive an export. Either one alone means a phone call. Both together means work starts.

STEP 02

What gets lost between them

Nothing here is a bug. It is what exchange formats are: a lowest common denominator agreed between packages that model the world differently. Knowing which column you are in stops you being surprised.

WHAT YOU SEE ON YOUR SCREEN	SURVIVES?	WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT
Geometry	Yes	Nothing. This is the part that always travels.
Parametric behaviour	No	Families and objects arrive as fixed geometry. Any change becomes a modelling job, so send the version you mean.
Materials	Names, usually. Appearance, rarely	Name materials meaningfully and send a separate finishes schedule. We rebuild the look anyway; we need to know what it is.
Textures	Only if linked and sent	Zip the texture folder with the model. Relinking someone else's missing maps is a slow, thankless hour.
Layers, classes, categories	Mostly, as flat names	Nesting and filters collapse. If a layer name carries meaning, it has to carry it on its own.
Units and scale	Yes, when stated	State the unit in the filename or the covering note. Millimetres and metres are the two-minute error that costs a day.
Origin and coordinates	Yes, including the bad ones	Models exported at survey coordinates land enormous distances from zero, which breaks precision. Export at a local origin and send the offset separately.
Curved and NURBS surfaces	As meshes	Set the tessellation before exporting. A coarse export shows as facets on every handrail in the final image.
Cameras and views	Rarely	If a viewpoint matters, send a screenshot with it. Ten seconds for you, half an hour saved for us.
Annotations and dimensions	No	This is why the PDF set goes with the model, every time.

Naming and layer discipline, in four rules

01	**Date first, in the filename**	`2026-03-14_projectname_model_mm.fbx` — sorts correctly, states the unit, and never needs an email to explain it.
02	**One word per layer that means something**	Glazing, structure, cladding, landscape, furniture, site. Six honest layers beat sixty inherited ones.
03	**Purge before export**	Unused blocks, dead layers, the neighbouring plot from the feasibility study. Send the building, not the archaeology.
04	**One current set, marked current**	A folder called `CURRENT` and an archive folder. Superseded drawings in the same folder as live ones are the most expensive habit in this list.

STEP 03

The one-page handover

Adopt this as a practice standard and send it with every visualisation package. It takes about fifteen minutes to fill in and it is the cheapest thing in the whole commission.

```
VISUALISATION HANDOVER        project _____________________
issued _____________  by _____________  contact _____________

MODEL
  file ___________________________________  format _____________
  units  mm / m / ft        origin  local / survey
  offset from survey origin  X______ Y______ Z______
  north point   defined in model ___   stated on plan ___
  what is modelled ____________________________________
  what is NOT modelled ________________________________

DRAWINGS
  current PDF set, revision _______ dated _____________
  plans ___  elevations ___  sections ___  site plan ___

CONTEXT
  topography / survey supplied ___   neighbouring built form ___

FINISHES
  schedule attached ___   physical samples sent ___
  manufacturer 3D files attached for _____________________

INTENT
  what the images are for _____________________________
  who signs off _______________________________________
```

The two lines that do the most work

“What is NOT modelled” and “what the images are for”. The first stops a studio assuming your placeholder balustrade is a design decision. The second is worth more than the rest of the sheet combined, and it is one sentence.

A note on version control

Send one package, from one person, on one date. Files arriving separately from three people over a week is how a studio ends up building two different versions of the same facade, and neither of them is yours.

Nothing in this guide requires you to change software, buy anything, or retrain anyone. It requires a naming rule, a purge before export, and a sheet. Practices that adopt those three things get cheaper quotes from every studio they approach, for the simple reason that the risk has gone out of the first week.

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

WRITTEN BY

Dim Kuzmenko
Co-Founder



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