

FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

What Your Product Brief Is Missing

The seven inputs that decide whether product CGI comes back right the first time, and the resolution matrix that stops you re-rendering for every channel.

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Product CGI fails on inputs, not on talent

Architectural CGI usually fails on communication. Product CGI usually fails earlier, on what arrived in the folder. A studio can only model what it can see, and a photograph of a product on a desk is not a specification.

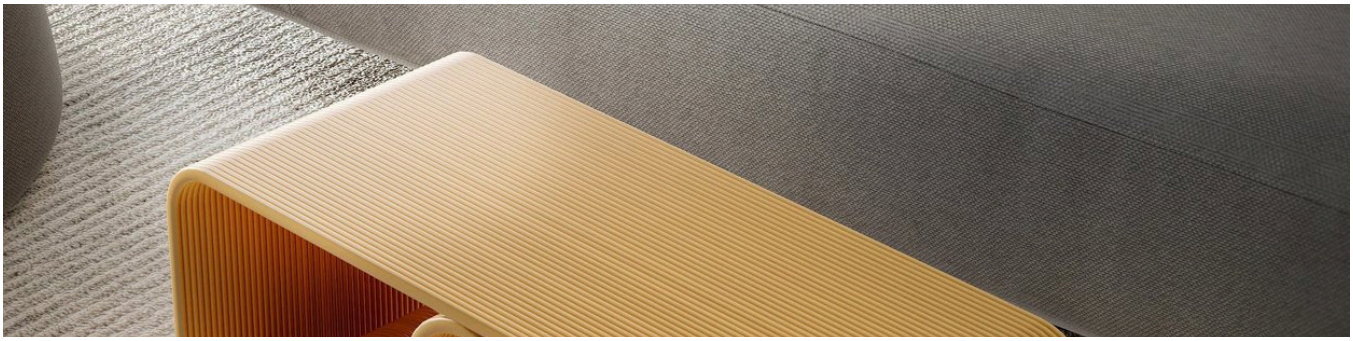
Send this, get it right first time

- CAD, in a neutral format such as STEP
- Physical samples of every finish that matters
- Exact colour references, not "our blue"
- Packaging artwork as print files
- Photographs of the real thing in real light

Send this, expect three rounds

- Web images of the product from your own shop page
- A competitor's photo as "the look we want"
- Colours described in words
- Packaging as a flattened JPG
- "You'll see what we mean"

Neither list is about budget. The first costs an afternoon of gathering and usually produces a better result for less money, because rounds of correction are the expensive part of product CGI, not the modelling.



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STEP 01

The seven inputs

01 CAD in a neutral format

STEP is the safe default. If all you have is a native file from one package, say which package and which version. If you have no CAD at all, say so clearly — the model then has to be built from measurement and photographs, which is a different job and a different price.

02 Physical samples of every finish that matters

Anodised aluminium, soft-touch coating, a specific textile, a particular gloss level. These cannot be judged from a screen, and a studio matching a finish from a supplier's website is guessing at the thing your customer will hold.

03 Exact colour references

Pantone, RAL, NCS, or a measured value. "Our blue" and a screenshot of a website are the two most common causes of a colour round.

04 Packaging artwork as print-ready files

Vector, with the dieline. A JPG of a finished box cannot be applied accurately to a 3D model, and text rebuilt by hand is where typos enter a product image.

05 Photographs of the real object

Not styled marketing shots — plain photographs in ordinary light, from several angles, including the parts nobody photographs. These tell a modeller how the thing actually behaves: where it catches light, where the seams are, how it sits.

06 Brand assets

Logo as vector with clear-space rules, and any lock-up that must appear. Specify where it goes on the product and where it must not.

07 What the images are for

One line. A marketplace listing, a print catalogue, a trade stand and a social ad want different framing, different crops and different resolutions, and it is much cheaper to know before the camera is set.

STEP 02

The resolution matrix

Decide this once, up front, and you render once. Decide it per channel as each one asks, and you re-render all year.

DESTINATION	SHAPE	WHAT TO ASK FOR
Marketplace listing	Square, usually	Check the platform's current maximum — it changes — and ask for twice its displayed size. Most require a plain white background, so request that version explicitly.
Your own product page	Square and wide	A hero, three supporting angles, one detail. Transparent background so the page can change colour without re-rendering.
Print catalogue	As laid out	300 dpi at final printed size, CMYK-safe, bleed if it runs off the page.
Trade stand / large format	Very wide or tall	Confirm the print size before rendering. Large-format is usually specified at lower dpi at full size, but ask the printer — not afterwards.
Social, paid	Vertical and square	**Composed** vertically, not cropped from a landscape frame. Cropping loses the composition you paid for.
Press and retail partners	Wide, high res	A clean version with no text, plus a short usage note. Partners will ask, and having it ready makes you easy to stock.
Every case	—	Transparent background and a layered file. Nearly free at production time, and it is what keeps the asset useful for two years.

The line that pays for itself

"All images delivered with transparent background and a layered file." It costs the studio almost nothing at the time, and it means your team can change a backdrop, drop the product into a lifestyle scene, or resize for a new platform without commissioning anything.

STEP 03

Make the model outlive the campaign

Product ranges change at the edges: a new colourway, a revised lid, one discontinued size. Whether next year costs a fraction or the full amount again is decided by four lines in this year's brief.

Put in the brief

- [ ] Real-world scale, stated units
- [ ] Parts named: body, lid, handle, label
- [ ] Each finish its own named material
- [ ] Label and packaging on their own mapped surface
- [ ] Textures supplied as linked files
- [ ] Cameras saved and named, reusable next season

Why the label line matters most

Artwork changes more often than products do. If the label sits on its own properly mapped surface, a new design is a five-minute swap across every image you own. If it was baked into the model, it is a re-render of the entire set, every time marketing revises a claim.

If you sell configurable products

Say so in the brief, before modelling starts. A model built for a web configurator has different requirements — polygon budget, material separation, export format — and converting a heavy hero model afterwards is usually a rebuild rather than an export.



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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
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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.

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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.