



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Five Steps. One Locked Look. Generated Once.

What to prepare and approve at each step of an AI video, from brief to final edit, what each step hands to the next, and the budget split per step, priced at mid-market studio rates.

START HERE

Why AI video budgets leak between the steps

AI video rarely overspends on generation itself. It overspends because decisions are made in the wrong order: shots are generated before the story is fixed, the look is chosen after fifty clips exist, and the ad versions are cut by a different team from scratch.

Every late decision throws away work that already exists. A new opening line means new shots; a new colour of light means every clip again; a separate team for the social versions means the cast and the product are generated a second time and no longer match the film.

PROMPTED SHOT BY SHOT		PLANNED AS ONE ROADMAP	
01	Clips generated before the script is agreed	Script and storyboard approved before the first still	
02	The look chosen after dozens of clips exist	One key still per shot locks the light, cast and palette	
03	Product redrawn differently in every clip	Every shot anchored to the same product references or 3D model	
04	Ad and social versions made by another team	Cut-downs and campaign stills taken from the approved shots	

The approved look is the asset. The clips are the output.

A storyboard and one approved still per shot are the cheapest part of an AI video and the part everything else depends on. Fix them first and every later step animates and edits what is already agreed, instead of generating it again.



Maverick Frame AI video still.

THE ROADMAP

What to approve at each step, and what it keeps

The five steps below are the ones on our AI video page. For each: what is produced, who signs it off, and what the next step inherits instead of paying for it again.

STAGE	PRODUCE AND APPROVE	WHO SIGNS IT OFF	CARRIES OVER
Brief	Goal, audience, channels, runtime and the source files	Marketing lead, brand owner	The brief every later step is checked against
Storyboard	Script and shot-by-shot storyboard with timings	Marketing, the client, legal if needed	The shot list and the edit timing
Key stills	One approved still per shot: cast, product, light, palette	Brand and product owners	The look of every clip and every campaign still
Motion	Each still animated into a short clip, weak takes replaced	The studio, then your review	The shots for every version of the film
Edit	Master film, grade, titles and the channel versions	Marketing, media buyers	A shot library for the next campaign

Start where you are

If you already have a script, start at Storyboard and ask for the key stills to be approved before any clip is animated. That is what lets the edit, the cut-downs and the campaign stills reuse the same shots rather than generate them again.

Not every project passes through all five steps. A single product loop may go from Brief to Motion in days; a brand film always needs Storyboard. The order still holds: whatever is approved first is what the later steps reuse.



Maverick Frame AI video still.

WHAT IT COSTS

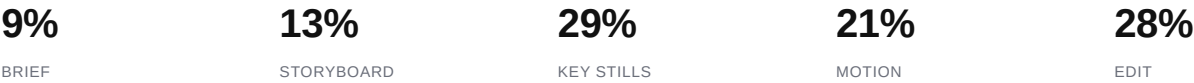
One 90-second film, five steps, line by line

A composite of one 90-second AI brand film of 30 shots with three cut-downs and ten campaign stills, priced at mid-market studio rates. The look is developed once at Key stills; the rows marked as reused cost less because nothing is generated again.

LINE ITEM	BASIS	AT STUDIO RATES
01 Brief: creative brief, script and shot list	once	\$315
02 Storyboard: 30 shots with timings	once	\$450
03 Key stills: look development, cast, palette, product reference	build, once	\$450
04 Key stills: one approved still per shot	30 x \$20, look reused	\$600
05 Motion: one clip per shot, weak takes replaced	30 x \$25, stills reused	\$750
06 Edit: master edit, grade and titles	90 s, once	\$450
07 Edit: cut-downs for 9:16, 1:1 and 6 s	3 x \$90, shots reused	\$270
08 Edit: campaign stills from approved shots	10 x \$30, look reused	\$300
Brief subtotal		\$315
Storyboard subtotal		\$450
Key stills subtotal		\$1,050
Motion subtotal		\$750
Edit subtotal		\$1,020

Planned as one roadmap \$3,585

The same deliverables made separately, from scratch \$4,865



From scratch means the same lines plus \$1,280: the \$450 look development done again for the cut-downs and for the campaign stills, the cut-downs edited as new ads at \$150 each instead of \$90, and the campaign stills generated new at \$50 each instead of \$30. Shares above are of the \$3,585 planned total.

THE ONE PAGE

What to send us at each step

The teams whose logos sit on our service pages do not send long specifications. At each step they send a few things like these, usually in the body of an email, and it is enough to quote from and to start work.

01	Brief: the goal	What the film has to do, for whom, where it will run and how long it can be.
02	Brief: the product	Product photos from several angles, or a CAD or 3D model if the shape must be exact.
03	Brief: the brand	Logo files, the brand book and two or three references you like.
04	Storyboard: the story	A script or a few lines of idea; we turn it into shots if you have none.
05	Storyboard: the approvers	Who signs off, and whether legal or the client has to see it.
06	Key stills: the cast	Any people, places or props that must appear, or must not.
07	Motion: the tempo	References for pace and camera movement, if you have a preference.
08	Edit: the channels	Formats, lengths, subtitles and any titles or end cards per channel.
09	Every step: the budget	A figure or a range. It is the quickest way to a scope that fits, and it is not a weakness.

Change the campaign, keep the look

If we made your film, a new version starts with one email: name the new message, channels and dates. The approved stills and shots are on file, so the quote starts from new shots only, not from a new look.

Our terms are on the next page

Market rates, timelines and what counts as a revision round are set out on page 06. The composite on page 04 is priced at mid-market studio rates.



Maverick Frame AI product visual.

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/
AI video work	maverickframe.com/services/ai-video-production/
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.