



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

What Virtual Staging Cannot Fix

The rooms staging works on, the photographs it fails on, a shooting checklist that makes an image stageable, and when a render from a model is the better buy.

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It stages furniture. It does not fix the room.

Virtual staging is a very good tool with a narrow job: placing believable furniture into an empty, clean, well-photographed room so a buyer can read scale and purpose. Everything sold as staging beyond that is something else, usually harder and often a different conversation entirely.

The most common disappointment is not bad staging. It is good staging applied to a photograph that was never going to work, and then blamed on the stager.

THE COMPLAINT	CAN STAGING FIX IT?
Empty room feels cold and small	Yes. This is precisely what it is for.
Buyer cannot tell what the room is for	Yes, with correctly scaled furniture that proves a bed or a table fits.
Room is full of the seller's furniture	Not directly. Removing existing contents is a separate, harder job than adding furniture. Empty the room and re-shoot if you can.
Blown-out window, dark corners, mixed colour light	No. Added furniture inherits the photograph's light. Bad light makes staging look pasted on.
Leaning walls, curved verticals, wide-lens distortion	No. Straight-edged furniture in a bent room is the most visible tell there is.
Low resolution, heavy phone processing, motion blur	No. Sharp furniture on a soft photograph reads as fake instantly.
Cracks, damp, dated kitchen, a pylon out the window	No — and altering permanent features is a disclosure question, not a production one. See page 05.
The room is genuinely too small	No. Honest furniture in a small room still shows a small room. That is the point of it.

Read that table as a purchasing tool. If your problem is in the lower half, money spent on staging is money spent on the wrong stage of the process — the fix is a better photograph, or a render built from a model.

STEP 01

What makes a photograph stageable

Give this page to whoever is taking the photographs, before they go. Nothing on it costs money and every item on it decides whether staging will work.

- ☐ **Empty the room properly.** Boxes, bins, cables, door mats, cleaning gear. Anything left behind has to be removed digitally, at cost.
- ☐ **Clean it and open it up.** Marks on the floor and smears on glass survive into every staged version.
- ☐ **Tripod, levelled.** Verticals straight. This is the single biggest difference between stageable and not.
- ☐ **Camera at roughly chest height.** Higher shrinks the room; lower exaggerates it and hides the floor.
- ☐ **Shoot from a corner.** Two walls and plenty of floor gives the stager somewhere to stand furniture.
- ☐ **Keep the floor visible.** A frame that crops the floor at the bottom edge cannot take a rug or a sofa convincingly.
- ☐ **Wide, but not fish-eye.** Extreme wide angles bend the room and no furniture will sit in it correctly.
- ☐ **One light story.** Ceiling lights off and daylight only, or lights on consistently — not a mixture room to room.
- ☐ **Bright overcast is the friend.** Even light, no hard shadow slabs, windows that are not pure white.
- ☐ **Blinds and curtains set the same way** in every frame of the property.
- ☐ **Full resolution, no beauty processing.** No portrait blur, no heavy HDR, no phone auto-enhancement.
- ☐ **Nothing of you in it.** No reflections in glass or mirrors, no shadow of the photographer, no people.

The cheapest decision in the whole process

Shoot each room from two positions, not one. It costs a minute on site. It gives you a second chance at every room without a return visit, and a second angle is often what turns an unstageable room into a stageable one.



STEP 02

What it costs, and when a render wins outright

How the two are priced

Staging is priced per photograph and is the cheapest visual asset in property marketing, because it is retouching an image somebody else already made. CGI from a model is priced per image and carries the cost of building the room. The ranges we publish for commissioned CGI are on page 06.

Before comparing them, ask the staging provider three things: the price per image, what counts as one revision, and whether furniture style and scale can be specified or only chosen from a set.

The comparison people get wrong

Staging is cheaper per image and stays cheaper per image. A render from a model is more expensive once and then produces every other angle, every variant, every lighting condition and a 360 tour from the same asset. One flat, one photograph: stage it. Forty units, six finish options and a brochure: the model was always the cheaper answer, and the arithmetic is not close.

The decision table

YOUR SITUATION	THE RIGHT TOOL
Empty flat, good daylight, decent photographs	Staging. Exactly the case it exists for.
Empty flat, poor light or bent verticals	Re-shoot first. Staging second. Spending on staging first wastes both.
Occupied, full of the owner's things	Declutter and shoot, then stage. Digital removal of contents is a different and more expensive service.
Not built, or a shell	Render from a model. There is no photograph to stage.
Same layout across many units	Model. Build once, output per unit, per finish, per view.
Showing a layout change or a removed wall	Model. Staging cannot move architecture and should not try.
Large print, hoarding or brochure spread	Model. Photographic staging is built for screen resolution and shows it when enlarged.
You will need more angles later	Model. Each new staged angle is a new photograph and a new job.



STEP 03

The disclosure question, asked the right way

We are not going to tell you what has to be disclosed. Nobody can, except your own regulator, your own professional body, your portal and your own legal adviser — and their answers differ by market and change over time. What follows is the list of questions to put to them, in writing, before your first staged image goes live.

01 Must a digitally staged image carry a label, and in what words?

Ask for the exact wording they expect rather than inventing your own.

02 Where does the label have to appear?

Burned into the image, in the caption, in the listing text, or all three — and does it differ by channel.

03 Is removing existing contents treated differently from adding furniture?

These are technically different operations and may be treated differently. Ask about both explicitly.

04 What is the position on permanent features?

Cracks, damp, a radiator, a boundary fence, a view out of the window. Ask specifically, because this is the category where a defensible marketing image and an indefensible one part company.

05 Do the rules differ between portal, brochure, window card and social?

They may. Ask channel by channel rather than assuming one answer covers all of them.

06 Who carries the responsibility — agent, seller or the staging provider?

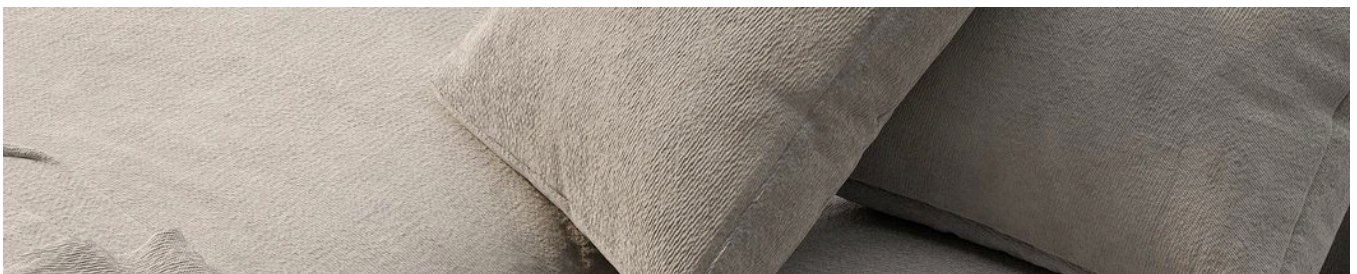
Get the answer before the work is commissioned, not after a complaint.

07 Should the original photograph be retained, and for how long?

Ask, then do whatever the answer is. It is free to keep files and expensive not to have them.

What we do, which is not the same as what you must do

In our own production we keep one rule: change what is movable, never what is permanent. Furniture, rugs, art and plants are movable. Walls, windows, ceiling height, the state of the fabric and the view out are not. It is a simple line, it is easy to explain to a client, and it has never once cost us an image worth having.



Maverick Frame production render.

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.

