

SG1 Consulting vs DIY Automation

When to hire experts vs build it yourself with Zapier, Make, or Power Automate

The Honest Truth About DIY Automation

No-code tools like Zapier, Make (Integromat), and Microsoft Power Automate have democratized automation. For many businesses, they're the perfect solution. But they're not for everyone.

This guide helps you decide when DIY makes sense, when you need expert help, and what questions to ask before committing either way.

Quick Comparison

Factor	DIY (Zapier/Make)	SG1 Consulting
Best for	Simple trigger→action workflows	Complex multi-step processes
Setup time	Hours to days	30-60 days (pilot)
Monthly cost	\$20-500/month	One-time project fee
Technical skill needed	Low to medium	None (we handle it)
Document AI	Limited/none	Full capability
Human review steps	Manual setup	Built into every workflow
Support	Documentation/forums	Direct expert support

When DIY Automation Makes Sense

Simple Triggers

"When X happens, do Y" workflows. New form submission → add to CRM. New payment → send receipt.

Low Volume

Less than 100 automations per month. Zapier's free tier handles 100 tasks, Make offers 1,000.

Standard Integrations

Common apps with pre-built connectors: Gmail, Slack, Google Sheets, Mailchimp, common CRMs.

Tech-Comfortable Team

You have someone who enjoys tinkering with tools and can dedicate time to building and maintaining.

When You Need Expert Help

Document Processing

Extracting data from invoices, contracts, forms, or emails. This requires AI/ML that no-code tools don't provide.

Complex Logic

Multi-step decisions, exceptions handling, approval workflows. "If X and Y but not Z, then..."

Legacy Systems

Industry-specific software without APIs, desktop applications, or systems with limited integration options.

No Time to Build

Your team is fully utilized. Building automation requires dedicated time you don't have.

High-Stakes Processes

Financial data, client communications, compliance-sensitive workflows. Errors have real consequences.

Scale Required

Thousands of transactions monthly. DIY tool costs scale linearly; custom solutions offer better economics.

The Hidden Costs of DIY Automation

Time Investment

Plan for 10-40 hours to build a moderately complex workflow. Then ongoing maintenance.

Scaling Costs

Zapier Professional: \$750/year. Business: \$1,200+/year. Costs grow with usage.

Maintenance

APIs change, apps update, workflows break. Someone needs to fix them.

What SG1 Does Differently

- ✓ **We use your existing tools**
Automation built inside Microsoft 365, Google Workspace, or your current CRM. No new platforms to learn.
- ✓ **Human review built in**
Every automation includes approval steps. Nothing runs fully autonomous unless you want it to.
- ✓ **Fixed-price pilots**
Know exactly what you'll spend upfront. If it doesn't work, you don't scale it.
- ✓ **Knowledge transfer**
We train your team to manage and extend automations. You're not locked into ongoing dependency.

Decision Framework

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Is this a simple trigger→action, or does it involve decisions and exceptions?
2. Do I have someone who can spend 10-40 hours building this?
3. What happens if this automation breaks? Is there a backup?
4. Does this process involve documents, PDFs, or unstructured data?
5. Will I need to scale this to hundreds or thousands of runs per month?

If you answered "yes" to questions 3, 4, or 5—or "no" to question 2—expert help will likely save you money in the long run.

Not Sure Which Path Is Right?

Book a free 15-minute call. We'll honestly tell you if DIY makes sense for your situation.

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