

Services vs. DIY: A Value Choice



By Lauren Elmore

With the ease of adopting technology and learning via YouTube, Pinterest, and online support centers, do-it-yourself (DIY) has become increasingly popular. This goes for everything from home improvement projects, to taxes, to projects as technical as stockpile inventory measurements. Until a couple of years ago, your only choice was to use a service provider for your stockpile inventory measurements, but now there are myriad of DIY solutions to choose from.

DIY is popular and often saves money. For example, I can go online and figure out how to do my home improvement project. It's fun, I feel accomplished, and I always get to look at my project and think about how I made it. Especially when we do a project with friends and family, we make memories. I'm currently learning how to build a swing from an old ski lift chair as a gift for my parent's house. There are an incredible number of sites and images of how to do this. Or, I could talk to my neighbor who is a contractor, and I could have him build it for me. My choice ultimately comes down to how I want to spend my time, how much time I actually have for a side project like this (I've had the chair for over a year), and how much money I want to spend. There's also the experience of building it that could add value for me. Ultimately, it comes down to a value choice.

The same is true in your business or operation. You can choose to hire a service provider or you can choose the DIY route. Like with my swing project, it all depends on the amount of time you have to spend on this particular project, the amount of money you want to spend, and the experience you want to have.

In this article, we'll explore the value choices in each of the options on the DIY spectrum from all DIY to full service providers.



Complete DIY

The complete DIY option is one where you buy your own drone and software package. You will fly the drone and process the data yourself. While the drone and software is new, the complete DIY solution has always been a common method for inventory measurement. Historically, many producers used a wheel and tape to measure their own inventories. Some bought fancy laser scanners and collected and processed their data that way.

Drones have made the complete DIY solution a much more viable option for many. It is more accurate than a wheel and tape and significantly less expensive and less complicated than a laser scanner setup. It is, in many cases, also cheaper than the service providers or partial DIY solutions we will review next. If you have the skill set and the time to process the data yourself, this may work for you.

In summary: high amounts of time, low cost, and the DIY experience.

Partial DIY

There are a couple of models in the partial DIY solutions for inventory measurement.

First, there are portal solutions. With these companies, you are given a drone and access to the company's portal. You fly the drone, upload images, and then process your data in their portal. Depending on your usage, these can be very cost-effective solutions. Like all DIY projects, they are only worth the money if you actually do them. In this solution, you spend your own time on essentially the entire process, like the complete DIY. The provider takes on some data processing pieces and provides you with the solution, so you do not have to make choices about your hardware or software.

Summary: high amounts of time, moderate costs (depending on usage), and the DIY experience

Second, some solutions just process the data for you. If you have your own drone, you can just send them data to be processed, and the company will process the data and give you a report. In this case, the first part of the process is a DIY experience. You did the research, bought your drone, and you fly it when you want. That's where your DIY experience stops. You then have a service provider do the data processing and analysis. Firmatek and others offer services like this for clients who already have their own drone.

Often those who choose this option have previously been doing the complete DIY solution, but it has gotten too time consuming. This is often a fairly low-cost solution.

Summary: moderate amounts of time, low costs, DIY on the flying and set up, Service on the results

Finally, Firmatek's Drone Solutions program is a bit of a mix between the two previous, partial DIY solutions. With our drone solution, we provide you with the drone and training to get you set up. Then you fly when you want. You upload the photos to us, and we process and analyze the data for you, giving you the deliverables you've requested. This gives you the DIY flying experience. You get to fly the drone, and you get to fly it when you want, but you don't have to figure the front or backend out yourself. This takes less time than either of the other two options. In comparing costs, you have to look at how much you use the solutions, but typically, this is a very cost-effective solution for clients.

Summary: low amounts of time, moderate costs, the DIY flying experience only

Services

While services may not be as "cool" or Instagram worthy as DIY, they can provide a lot of value. And that is why many still choose to use full service providers, even though they may be more expensive than a DIY method.

Just because Home Depot and Pinterest make it possible for me to build the swing myself, doesn't mean I'm actually going to do it. I've had the swing sitting around for over a year, and I still haven't built the frame. For a lot of us, DIY may be cheaper, but it isn't worth it. We don't have the time to DIY. We don't have the time to get up on the learning curve. We don't have the time to do the job. Services are not going away, even though DIY is an option.

Additionally, many people value service. It's not just about saved time. Clients value having an expert do the job. They value the ability to ask questions and get answers from a knowledgeable staff. There are often complexities to a job that go beyond the capabilities of a DIY-er. For example, I may be able to build a swing frame, but there's no way I'm capable of doing a full bathroom demo. Similarly, measuring stockpiles may be in a client's DIY skill set, but mine planning or complex engineering projects may not be in their skill set. They may not have the right technology or expertise, so they need a service provider to come alongside their team and provide that service for them.

Summary: low time, high/moderate costs, the service experience

It's a Value Choice

Services are not going away. DIY is not going away. Each option and spectrum of choices that are available in this industry provide value for the right user. But don't fool yourself into believing there is a one-size-fits-all solution. Each client needs to evaluate their needs and expectations. At Firmatek, we believe that clients deserve a tailored solution and we work with them to determine which option on the spectrum of full service to partial DIY makes sense for them. We work to help clients uncover what value choices are right for them.