

Four Key Considerations Before Offering Your UAS Pilot Services



Hired as a pilot for a drone operation?

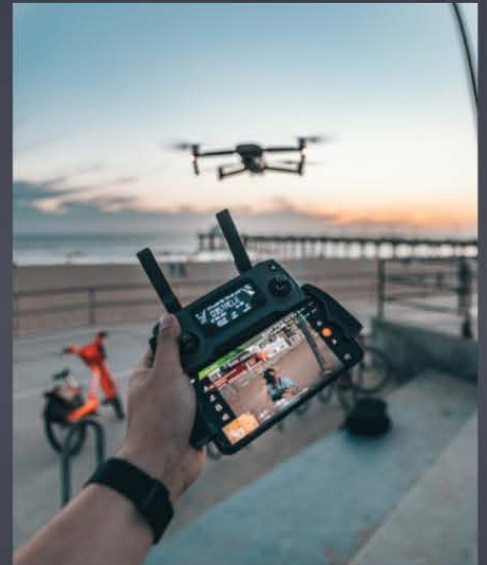
Excellent!

Just keep the following in mind:

1. What does your client actually need? (i.e. Is a drone really the best tool?)

This may sound strange coming from a drone company, but many times people are attracted to the idea of using drones (with associated benefits and drawbacks), when simpler solutions exist.

You may be able to provide the same level of service easier with a pole camera, or even a ladder.



2. Does your client need the data processed?

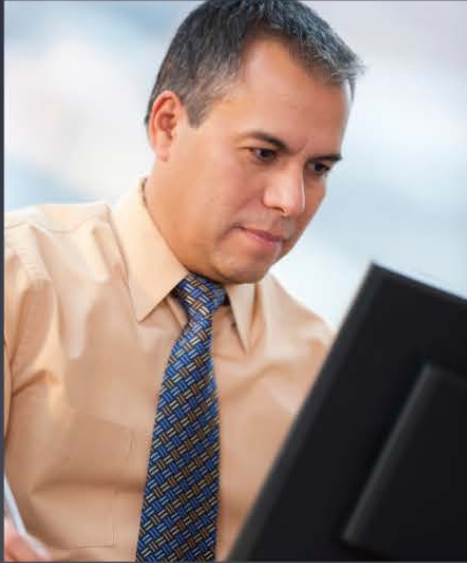
This can be a big issue, especially for a smaller operator.

Processing can be time-consuming, tricky, and costly. Consider how long you will retain any copies (if at all), data protection, storage costs etc. It all adds up quickly.

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3. Can you realistically produce it? (resolution, output, etc.)



Don't make the mistake of over-promising and under-delivering. Yes, there are many free tools available to automate data capture - sometimes quite reasonably.

But, is it going to deliver what a paying customer expects? Nothing's worse than a complaint & bad review after a job gone wrong.

4. Your business reputation if you get it wrong.

In the end, you're liable for your actions. Cutting corners to save costs may result in you facing charges in court if you breach regulations. And, whether your clients are satisfied or disappointed, reviews and recommendations travel fast. To ensure continued business, prove to them they hired the right person for the job!

Remember: Your clients are trusting you with their needs - Don't let them down!

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Breaking Down the Details

If you, as a UAS operator are chosen, then you need to consider the following:

- **Can you legally conduct the job?**

- Apart from regulatory qualifications in the area to fly, you will need to have insurance - UK / EU to EC785/2004 (aviation risks) level, since it will be commercial work.
- In the USA, a third-party indemnity is often required.

- **Landowner permission**

- It is often a stipulation of your authorization to fly that you have permission to take off & land at the point you are using. But, be careful; many people assume that since you're allowed to be in a certain area, it means you have permission to fly. **However**, that's not always the case.
- For instance, in the UK, a public footpath provides a right to use it for 'free and unimpeded use to pass and repass'. This does not confer a right to use it as a take-off and landing spot for drones.

- No matter where you're operating, you must *always* comply with your *local regulations*.

- **Can you operate in the location you want legally and safely?**

- The operation of drones is subject to regulations concerning where they can fly, how close to people & buildings, etc.
- In general, unless a lower limit is set by an enhanced Operating Authorisation, the following apply:
 - In the UK - Not within 50 meters of uninvolved persons / vehicles that may contain uninvolved persons. Special permission required from Air Traffic Control if inside certain aerodrome boundaries.
 - In the EU - Member States - Not within 50 meters of uninvolved persons, or vehicles that may contain uninvolved persons. You may need special permissions if operating near aerodromes or controlled airspace.
 - In the US - not over people, unless certain parameters for the aircraft are met, such as weight, parachutes etc. Permission is required when operating near airports or in controlled airspace.
- If you are operating in the UK/EU in the Open Category, then the restrictions set by the sub-category apply. This limits the weight of your UAV and distance to people. This may well make an otherwise very difficult job much simpler. However, the need to have insurance may be complicated by not holding a GVC.



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- **Privacy must also be considered.**

- How will you handle regulations such the General Data Protection Regulations (or right to privacy?). Flying in public can be simple enough. However, if you're identifying individuals or viewing private areas, how will you handle or manage this? Again, local laws must always be respected

- **Flight Restriction Zones and other airspace restrictions.**

- You must have regulatory permission to fly in certain areas, be it close to an airport, in controlled airspace, or a prohibited, restricted, or danger area. In addition, you must adhere to restrictions on local airspace. While it may be for military purposes, other reasons necessitate it, as well.
- A number of EU locations limit maximum heights, set by category flown. For example, outside Dublin Airport in the Republic of Ireland, a restriction of '30m or the height of the tallest obstacle within 50m of the obstacle. In this case, the maximum height flown may be increased by up to 15M above the height of the obstacle, at the request of the entity responsible for the obstacle' when flying in the open category.

- **Equipment availability**

- Over the years, one thing we have learned to ensure at every opportunity is redundancy. You can bet your bottom dollar that if you're reliant on something, and you only have one of it, it will be the one piece of equipment that fails.
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- To the financial extent possible, always have a backup aircraft, SD cards, additional sensors and lenses, filters (including ND), plenty of barrier tape and cones, etc. It's always better to have some kit you don't use than to have a client watching over you, tapping their foot and counting the costs while you agonize over a faulty piece of your kit. All it takes is one experience like this to feel the pain.

- **Power management and batteries**

- Lastly, although it sounds obvious, ensure you have either a means of battery charging or sufficient batteries to avoid the same situation as above. You certainly don't want to sit in your car, watching your battery slowly charging through the auxiliary power supply. Again, time is money, for both you and your client. And, to make things even worse, it's an incredibly embarrassing situation.

