

# Should You Do It Yourself?

LegalZoom™ advertises itself as a cheaper alternative to an attorney. Intuit, through its “Quicken WillMaker™”, and other do-it-yourself programs, entice people to forgo professional advice, assuring them that the documents they create will be “just as good as one created by an attorney.”

**These programs and web sites are popular with lawyers, too!  
Why? Because they make more work for lawyers in the future.**

Recently, *Consumer Reports* magazine recently evaluated LegalZoom, Nolo, and Rocket Lawyer in an article “Legal DIY sites no match for a Pro” (September 2012, p. 13.) The editors concluded that unless your needs are very simple, the will writing products of these companies not only are unlikely to meet your needs, but can even lead to unintended results. Among other issues, too often the documents produced are not properly tailored to individual jurisdictions (states). As stated in the article, “Many consumers are better off consulting a lawyer.”

Laws are not static. They constantly change because of new case law and statutes. And lawyers keep up with these changes in order to best advise their clients. That’s why these online legal sites issue significant disclaimers. For example, on the top left-hand corner of its estate planning questionnaire, LegalZoom reveals that 80 percent of people who fill in blank forms to create legal documents do so incorrectly. Despite this disclaimer, LegalZoom tries to reassure its customers that professionals are there to help; that customers can have “peace of mind” knowing that LegalZoom professionals will customize their will based on their legal decisions.

The hard fact is that people who use do-it-yourself estate planning kits end up with a false sense of security. They create documents that they believe will address their estate

planning needs. But with estate planning documents, they are unlikely to discover their mistakes.

Why? Because the mistakes will not become evident until after they become incapacitated or die. And the people who will be left to deal with the mistakes are usually the people the documents were supposed to protect.

Attorneys don't simply fill in forms. Rather, we use the knowledge we have acquired during our many years of schooling and practice to advise you on the best way to protect your family, and preserve and distribute your assets in the manner you choose. And yes, that has a price.