

Zapier's Website: <https://zapier.com/>

Zapier is advertised to be the solution for individuals who seek to automate and combine separate apps together, serving as the glue between them. It is meant for those without technical backgrounds in programming, and aims to not require any IT specialist to assist them. As such it utilizes simpler keywords and its own terminology for its functionality.

Effectively, Zapier seems to work on an Event-Listener model in its operation. At the very least, this is how the sponsor currently utilizes it. Zapier has what they call "Zaps," which serves as each block of action to take in response to an event. These Zaps stem from a trigger, which is effectively an Listener for a specific event. These Zaps then create a flowchart for Zapier to follow as the user designed in order to automate and connect their software and apps. These flowcharts can also include splitting paths that start with rules that dictate when to take each path. Each time a flowchart successfully operates, it is said to have performed a task.

Zapier has different pricing options to best suit the requirements for it. However, all of these have a scalable price that increases based upon how many tasks per month you intend to use. It works almost as if it were a data plan. Starting with the free model, each one gets exponentially more expensive than the last up to the Enterprise level. The free model allows access to the platform, Unlimited Zaps within the users task limit, but only make two-step long Zap flowcharts. Professional adds the capabilities for webhooks, email support, and multi-step Zaps. Team adds unlimited users, shared workspaces, shared app connections, premier support which gives priority to their tickets, and security features. Lastly, the Enterprise model adds advanced admin permissions, app controls, designated technical support, and annual instead of monthly limits.

Currently, the sponsor uses Zapier to take emails that are provided from USchedule after a reservation has been made, scans their format looking for key information fields, adds the information to a Google Calendar, which then the Google Calendar is observed by the raspberry pi home assistant on the premises to automatically startup the scheduled bay area. Currently, the sponsor has expressed zero issues with the program and intends to keep using it, unless an easier, more efficient, and cost effective method within their scope of the project is discovered. The only dissatisfaction stated, is that when customers reschedule an appointment, Zapier struggles to handle it properly. It will still perform its function to the best of its ability, but typically requires manual intervention to be set properly for bookkeeping. A possible solution to look for is seeing if we can better create their workflow for this task, and refine it to where it can properly handle rescheduling. It does not seem advantageous to seek alternatives as the sponsor has expressed their great satisfaction with Zapier and their desire to maintain it going forward.