

Expediting: Delivery Date Monitoring and Status Checks in Procurement

Expediting refers to the systematic monitoring of delivery progress at the supplier to ensure that agreed delivery dates are met. It includes regular status enquiries, schedule checks at intermediate stages of manufacturing and, where appropriate, on-site inspections. For technical buyers, expediting is a central instrument for identifying supply risks early and initiating countermeasures before a bottleneck endangers production.

Key facts

- Expediting involves the proactive monitoring of delivery dates, manufacturing progress and documentation at the supplier.
- The foundation is robust schedule planning with clearly defined milestones for each PO order line.
- Typical methods are telephone and e-mail status enquiries, on-site visits and review meetings at fixed intervals.
- The intensity is controlled via supplier segmentation: critical parts and risky suppliers receive closer monitoring.
- Metrics such as on-time delivery (OTD) or PPM quality give expediting a measurable basis.
- Digitalisation is increasingly shifting expediting to supplier portals and automated status data instead of purely manual enquiries.

Definition: Expediting

Expediting is the systematic follow-up and acceleration of orders along the entire supply chain. It aims to uncover deviations between the manufacturing stage scheduled in purchasing and the stage actually achieved as early as possible. The term derives from the English 'to expedite' (to accelerate, to push forward) and is mostly used synonymously with delivery date monitoring in German industrial purchasing.

Distinction from classical dunning/chasing

Expediting starts considerably earlier than a dunning run: while a reminder only reacts once a deadline has already been exceeded, expediting acts preventively during order processing. The focus is on the assessment 'Is the order on track?' rather than the demand 'Why was the deadline missed?'. In practice, the two instruments complement each other – the expediting result frequently provides the trigger for a formalised chase process.

Anchoring in the procurement process

Expediting is typically part of order management, i.e. the phase after placement of the order and before goods receipt. The corresponding requirements form part of the terms and conditions of purchase or the procurement agreements, for example reporting intervals, the scope of status reports or the supplier's duty to cooperate. In project-based business, such as plant engineering, a dedicated expediting team

with dedicated schedules is common.

Methods and approach in expediting

The approach ranges from simple telephone enquiries to a structured status review with manufacturing documentation. Which method is chosen depends on the criticality of the order, the supplier risk and the available-to-promise situation in the buyer's own plant. Good practice is a tiered model that links control depth and effort to the risk.

Control intervals and escalation levels

A tiered model is common: routine orders are checked remotely on a cyclical basis, for example two weeks before the delivery date. Critical orders receive fixed milestone checks such as drawing approval, material procurement, partial production start and dispatch preparation. In the event of a deviation, a defined escalation follows – from a four-eyes discussion with the supplier's sales representative, through management levels, to joint crisis measures, including alternative scheduling at order level.

- Remote status enquiry at defined milestones
- On-site expediting for long lead times or first-time orders
- Escalation matrix with responsibilities and response times

On-site expediting and intermediate audit

For complex orders – large components, customised manufacture or new parts – expeditors check the physical progress against the schedule at the supplier. Among other things, material availability, machine allocation, production status, inspection documents and packaging status are checked. Such on-site visits can usefully be combined with quality topics, for example an audit-plan meeting or an ATP (available-to-promise) check synchronised in advance for upcoming call-offs.

Interface to call-offs and quantity planning

In series supply relationships, expediting is directed not only at individual purchase orders but at scheduling-agreement call-offs. Here it helps to be able to optimise scheduling-agreement call-offs: whoever improves call-off quality – more stable demand signals, binding firm zones, an agreed consensus forecast – significantly reduces expediting effort, because fewer short-notice discussions arise. Conversely, expediting findings provide feedback into materials planning, for example on realistic capacity limits from the supplier capacity check.

Key KPIs for steering expediting

Without measurable variables, expediting remains firefighting. Core metrics describe how reliably deadlines are met and how high the monitoring effort is per order volume. At the same time, they form the basis for supplier segmentation and dual-source management, since chronic schedule problems are a strong argument for second sources.

Schedule adherence and delivery reliability

The on-time delivery rate (OTD) measures the proportion of punctual deliveries, complemented by delivery reliability in terms of quantity. In practice, benchmark values of over 95 per cent are regarded as solid, while values beyond 98 per cent are frequently targeted in just-in-time relationships. What is decisive is whether schedule adherence is measured against confirmed or requested dates – both should be reported separately, as otherwise suppliers will state confirmation dates in an embellished

form.

Expediting effort and risk index

The relative expediting effort has proven its worth as a control variable, for example expedited orders as a share of total order volume, or hours per million euros of procurement volume. In addition, many companies assess a supplier risk index based on schedule history, quality metrics such as parts per million (PPM), capacity utilisation and industry risks. Rising effort despite stable OTD frequently indicates structural problems in the supplier's production control.

Quality and logistical knock-on metrics

Expediting interacts with other metrics: high PPM values lead to rework and replacement part cycles and thus to additional schedule pressure; imbalanced logistics costs become apparent when expediting increasingly leads to air freight or express shipping. Transregional supply chains with trade terms such as CIF also influence the point at which the buyer bears the transport risk – and from which point expediting must actively leverage the transport lever.

Risks, legal framework and controls

Although expediting strengthens delivery schedule adherence, it also carries pitfalls: aggressive pressure can tempt the supplier into quality compromises, unclear responsibilities lead to duplication of effort, and missing contractual duties to cooperate weaken the buyer's position. Clear rulebooks and documented checks are therefore essential.

Contractual safeguards

The foundation is effective terms and conditions of purchase with penalty clauses, rights of withdrawal, notification duties and a clear definition of the delivery date (dispatch-based versus goods-receipt-based). For cross-border procurement, customs tariff numbers, preference calculation and transport clauses also play a role, as delays can have an impact on customs procedures and delivery dates. Which sanctions and rights can be enforced in the individual case should be reviewed legally – the design depends heavily on the individual case and applicable law.

Quality risks due to schedule pressure

Under schedule pressure, there is a risk that inspection steps are bypassed or documentation is submitted late. Incoming goods should therefore be strictly inspected even for expedited orders; non-conforming deliveries result in a documented notice of defects (Mängelrüge) with defined time limits. On-site expediting and quality audits according to the audit plan should be combined so that schedule pressure and process discipline do not diverge.

Sustainability and reporting obligations

Expediting also has a sustainability dimension in some respects: express transports as a reaction to schedule delays significantly increase the supply chain carbon footprint (SCF) compared with road or rail. Those who consistently feed expediting results into supplier selection and development reduce, in the long term, both schedule problems and emissions and packaging effort – the latter also in light of the packaging obligations under the German Packaging Act (VerpackG) in trade with packaging.

Current developments: digitalisation and AI in expediting

The classical telephone enquiry is increasingly being replaced by digital solutions. Supplier portals, supply chain platforms and standardised status interfaces provide real-time data on production status, dispatch and documentation. This changes the role of the expeditor: away from the enquirer, towards an analyst who identifies and prioritises deviation patterns.

Automated status data and predictive analytics

Digital systems take over routine enquiries and automatically flag deviations, for example on the basis of confirmation behaviour, lead times of historical orders or transport data. Predictive approaches attempt to forecast delays before they are reported. Limits remain: data quality and the willingness to cooperate of smaller suppliers are often limited, and pure data alone does not fully replace conversation and on-site impressions.

Integration into strategy and requirements management

Expediting is only as good as the planning behind it. Unclear specifications or frequent changes in requirements management create schedule conflicts that no expediting can resolve. Good practice therefore links expediting findings to strategic topics such as the outsourcing potential analysis, dual-source management and active price formation – because suppliers effectively treat the additional effort for schedule monitoring as a cost factor and reflect it accordingly in negotiations, for example in every round of negotiations.

Typical metrics

On-time delivery (OTD): > 95 %

Proportion of punctual deliveries; for JIT relationships, > 98 % is frequently targeted

Expediting effort: < 5 % of orders

Proportion of actively expedited orders; a high value indicates structural supplier problems

PPM: < 500 PPM

Quality metric; high values create additional deadline and replacement part cycles

Milestone adherence: > 90 %

Proportion of intermediate milestones met on critical orders

Practical example: mechanical engineering company tightens up expediting

A medium-sized mechanical engineering company with around 5,000 active PO order lines per year repeatedly experienced production stoppages because critical purchased parts arrived late, even though the confirmed dates had seemed plausible. An analysis revealed: around one third of the delays occurred between sub-assembly manufacturing and dispatch, i.e. in an area that had not previously been expedited.

- Introduction of a three-stage expediting model: remote for standard parts, milestone monitoring for A-parts, on-site dates for new parts and long lead times
- Definition of mandatory milestones and reporting intervals in the terms and conditions of purchase of all A-suppliers
- Weekly risk meeting between purchasing, materials planning and production control with escalation

decisions and, where necessary, redirection via alternative sources

- Integration of the supplier portal with the ERP system, so that status reports are automatically reconciled with the ATP check

Conclusion

Expediting is more than making enquiries with the supplier: it is a structured control system that makes deviations visible early and keeps purchasing capable of acting. It is only effective in combination with robust schedules, clear contractual obligations and measurable metrics. Digitalisation significantly reduces the manual effort but does not replace the judgement of experienced buyers. Companies that consistently integrate expediting into supplier evaluation, strategy and production planning reduce the risk of failure and increase the reliability of their entire supply chain.

Frequently asked questions

What does expediting mean in procurement?

Expediting refers to the systematic monitoring of delivery progress at the supplier to ensure that confirmed delivery dates are met. It includes status enquiries, milestone checks and on-site inspections during order processing. The aim is to identify deviations early, before they jeopardise the buyer's own production.

What is the difference between expediting and dunning/chasing?

The dunning/chase process reacts to deadlines that have already been missed, for example through escalating reminders. Expediting, by contrast, works preventively by continuously monitoring manufacturing progress and uncovering deviations before the deadline. In practice, the two go hand in hand: expediting results frequently trigger formal chase processes.

When is on-site expediting sensible?

On-site expediting is worthwhile for customised components, long lead times, first-time orders or suppliers with an elevated schedule risk. On site, production status, material availability and documentation can be physically verified. For standard series parts, remote status monitoring via portal or e-mail is usually sufficient.

Which metrics are used for expediting?

Key metrics are on-time delivery (OTD), delivery reliability in terms of quantity, and the relative expediting effort. In addition, quality data such as parts per million (PPM) is included in supplier evaluation. It is important to evaluate confirmed dates and requested dates separately in order to avoid distortion.

How much expediting is appropriate?

The effort should be proportionate to the risk: critical parts, high-volume orders and risky suppliers receive close-meshed monitoring, while standard orders only receive cyclical remote checks. Sound supplier segmentation helps to deploy resources in a targeted manner. In practice, it has been shown that over 90 per cent of expediting success results from managing a small group of critical suppliers.

How can expediting be digitalised?

Typical building blocks are supplier portals with standardised status reports, the automated replacement of telephone lists, and integration with ERP systems including ATP checks. AI-supported forecasts can

indicate delays at an early stage. A minimum level of data quality and supplier cooperation is a prerequisite.