

Call-off delivery schedule: the binding foundation for long-term supply

A call-off delivery schedule is a binding or semi-binding overview that specifies the type, quantity and dates of recurring deliveries over a longer period. It operationalises an existing framework agreement or procurement strategy into plannable call-off and scheduling quantities. For technical buyers and suppliers, it is the central control instrument of procurement logistics for aligning demand, capacity and delivery reliability.

Key facts

- The call-off delivery schedule typically defines delivery quantities and dates for weeks to months in advance, either bindingly or as call-offs.
- It operationalises framework agreements and in practice frequently replaces individual PO orders for series demand.
- Key KPIs are on-time delivery, quantity compliance and the rate of call-off changes.
- Bindingness and change rules must be clearly regulated contractually, particularly with purchased-part suppliers with long lead times.
- Maintenance via EDI or portals reduces media discontinuities and improves schedule tracking on both sides.

Definition: call-off delivery schedule

A call-off delivery schedule (in English, Frequently Asked Delivery Schedule or Release Schedule) is a recurring delivery plan that, on the basis of a framework agreement, maps the planned withdrawals of a demand carrier over a defined period. Unlike a single order, it covers several future periods on a forward-looking basis. In many ERP and EDI environments it is structurally related to the call-off order or forecast, but differs from these through a higher degree of bindingness.

Distinction from call-off order and PO order

The classic PO order generally covers a specific requirement with a firm delivery date, whereas the call-off delivery schedule defines several items and periods at once. Practice frequently runs in two stages: the call-off delivery schedule provides the quantity and date structure, from which a binding PO order or delivery call-off is then generated for individual weeks. What is decisive is the clear contractual definition of the point at which planning values become binding, for example two to four weeks before the delivery date.

Bindingness tiers in practice

A three-tier structure is customary: distant periods as non-binding planning values, mid-term periods as forecasts with limited binding force, and near-term periods as binding call-offs. This tiering protects the supplier against mis-disposition and the buyer against overly rigid commitment. For long-running parts or castings with long lead times, special rules are frequently agreed, for example binding calls for colour

additives or blanks earlier in the schedule.

Structure and components of a call-off delivery schedule

A fit-for-purpose call-off delivery schedule contains, alongside item number and plant, standardised delivery quantities per period, requested delivery dates, packaging and delivery specifications and references to the framework agreement. Depending on the industry, quality and documentation requirements are added, such as inspection certificates or hazardous goods management information for chemical components.

Time structure and call-off horizons

A horizon of three to twelve months is typical, structured by daily, weekly and monthly granularity: near-term weeks day-exact, mid-term weeks by quantity, distant months as totals. The horizon should correspond at least to the cumulative lead time including the procurement time of upstream suppliers. If that is not the case, a planning gap arises which manifests itself in schedule deviations in procurement logistics.

Communication formats and systems

In serialised supply relationships, the call-off delivery schedule frequently runs as an EDI format such as EDIFACT DELFOR or as a portal/web EDI call-off. Unambiguous versioning and change logic are important so that the supplier can identify which values are new, changed or binding. Without versioned records, interpretation conflicts arise which manifest themselves in shortfalls and renegotiations.

Methods and approach for introduction and maintenance

The introduction of a call-off delivery schedule begins with demand analysis based on ABC/XYZ classification cycle analysis: A- and X-items with stable demand are best suited to fixed schedule structures. Subsequently, bindingness rules, change deadlines and escalation paths are defined in the framework agreement or in supply agreements.

Demand forecasting and quantity alignment

The basis is consumed quantities, order backlog and customer statements; pure statistics is rarely sufficient for customer-specific series. Proven practice is a regular alignment cycle with the supplier in which schedule deviations are discussed and corrective actions agreed. With strongly fluctuating demand, safety stock or bandwidth clauses help rather than fixed point quantities.

Change management and change deadlines

Every call-off delivery schedule needs defined change windows: within the binding zone, quantity changes are typically only possible against cost reimbursement, while looser rules apply outside it. Clean change management documents every adjustment with a timestamp and accountable party. This avoids disputes over excess quantities, residual quantities or obsolete parts.

Integration into the procurement strategy

The call-off delivery schedule is operational but not strategy-neutral: it presupposes that the procurement strategy for the item has already been decided, i.e. supplier, price basis and terms are in place. With multiple sources of supply, a quantity split is frequently stored and applied periodically in the schedule. Aspects such as catalogue compliance for ancillary materials and standard parts can also be

controlled via the schedule logic.

Key KPIs and metrics for the call-off delivery schedule

The call-off delivery schedule can be measured and thereby steered. Central measures are on-time delivery (OTD), quantity compliance and schedule stability, measured by the number of changed call-off positions per period.

On-time delivery and schedule deviation analysis

In practice, delivery performance is mostly measured at line-item level; values above 95 to 98 per cent are typically targeted. In addition, schedule deviation analysis provides the average deviation in days and reveals systematic tendencies towards earliness or lateness. Early deliveries are not a success in this context — they tie up capital and storage space.

Schedule stability and change rate

Schedule stability describes what percentage of binding positions is changed after the fact per period; in stable series production, leading values are frequently below five per cent, and in volatile environments considerably above. High change rates are an early warning indicator of forecasting problems or missing customer data integration. They justify higher safety stocks or price surcharges on the supplier side.

Service levels and service credits (SLA)

Supplier contracts frequently attach service credits (SLA) to schedule performance, i.e. agreed fee reductions if defined on-time delivery targets are missed. The schedule KPIs thus form the measurement basis for contractual sanctioning. Conversely, the buyer can also be measured on schedule stability, for example in relation to supplier commitments on reserve quantities.

Risks and controls for the call-off delivery schedule

The greatest area of risk lies in unclear bindingness and in data quality. Added to this are supplier risks, which must be assessed through supply risk management, ranging from financial stability to cyber risk at the supplier affecting EDI connections.

Bindingness and liability issues

Anyone committing to binding call-offs without change deadlines risks acceptance issues, claims for delay damages and substitution claims. Conversely, suppliers with long lead times should receive safeguards, such as minimum call-offs or stock clauses. Limitation of liability and force majeure provisions therefore belong in every framework agreement; tax and legal detail questions should be examined by qualified specialists on a case-by-case basis.

Conformity and compliance checks

For international suppliers, sanctions list screening and export control belong in the onboarding and ordering processes, even if the call-off delivery schedule only governs volume. Payment arrangements such as self-billing, or a letter of credit for first deliveries from abroad, in turn influence the process reliability of the supply. Results from clarification rounds in enquiry and quotation should likewise be cleanly transferred before the schedule starts.

Operational control and schedule tracking

Without systematic schedule tracking, the schedule remains a paper exercise. Weekly target/actual comparisons, open lists for confirmations and automatic alerts for unconfirmed call-offs have proven their worth. Supplier evaluations feed the results back into the next round of contract or term negotiations.

Current developments and digital perspectives

Call-off delivery schedules are becoming increasingly data-driven: AI-supported forecasts, automatic call-off generation and supplier portals are transforming their maintenance. At the same time, pressure is growing from supply chain due diligence, sustainability requirements and geopolitically induced planning uncertainty.

Automation and AI support

Modern ERP and planning systems generate call-off delivery schedule proposals from consumption and order data, which the buyer releases. AI forecasts can map seasonality and patterns better, but do not replace alignment with binding customer orders. At the same time, manual workload is reduced by anomaly detection and automatic reminders for unconfirmed call-offs.

Resilience instead of pure cost efficiency

Many companies supplement call-off delivery schedules with resilience elements: dual-sourcing strategies, adherence to bandwidths instead of point values and deliberate safety stocks for critical items. Formats such as a supplier innovation day or joint capacity planning are gaining importance for identifying bottlenecks earlier. Freight cost management and lead-time compensation move more into focus for disruption-prone supply chains.

Cost-oriented planning

Plannable quantity profiles open up economies of scale for the supplier, which can translate into price advantages. Approaches such as design-to-cost act upstream on the volume and material structure and thereby simplify later planning. A functioning call-off delivery schedule is thus also a lever for continuous cost negotiations in series operation.

Typical metrics

Delivery performance (on-time delivery, OTD): > 95–98 %

Customary target corridor at line-item level in series supply relationships

Schedule stability (change rate): < 5–10 %

Share of subsequently changed binding positions per period; industry-dependent

Supplier confirmation rate: > 98 %

Share of promptly confirmed call-off positions; early indicator of disposition problems

Call-off horizon: >= cumulative lead time

The horizon should cover lead times including upstream suppliers, frequently 3–12 months

Practical example

A medium-sized mechanical engineering company supplies series customers with tolerance-critical

turned parts. Until now, weekly individual orders kept purchasing fully occupied and led to frequent schedule deviations at the supplier, who had to procure castings with eight-week lead times. Purchasing introduced a call-off delivery schedule with a four-week binding call-off window and a twelve-week forecast horizon. After six months, delivery performance had stabilised markedly, and the supplier was able to firm up casting call-offs earlier.

- Bindingness tiers contractually fixed: daily call-offs four weeks, forecast twelve weeks, planning values six months.
- EDI connection (DELFOR) with version logic and automatic confirmation obligation on the supplier's part.
- Monthly alignment meeting with quantity and schedule deviation analysis and documented change management.
- Integration into supplier evaluation with agreed service credits if on-time delivery falls below 95 per cent.

Conclusion

The call-off delivery schedule is the link between strategic procurement decisions and day-exact supply. It creates planning certainty for both parties, reduces administrative effort and makes delivery performance measurable. Decisive for success are clear bindingness rules, sound system support and a disciplined change process. Companies that consistently maintain call-off delivery schedules typically reduce ad-hoc orders, bottleneck risks and renegotiation costs in practice. The call-off delivery schedule is therefore an indispensable instrument of modern procurement logistics for series and recurring demand.

Frequently asked questions

What is a call-off delivery schedule?

A call-off delivery schedule is a rolling delivery overview that defines quantities and dates for recurring deliveries across multiple periods. It operationalises a framework agreement and frequently replaces individual purchase orders. Bindingness typically increases as the delivery date approaches.

What is the difference between a framework agreement, call-off order and call-off delivery schedule?

The framework agreement governs terms and quantity ranges over its term, usually without specific dates. The call-off delivery schedule sets out period quantities and delivery dates on a forward-looking basis. The call-off order or PO order is ultimately the binding case-by-case release from that schedule.

From when is a call-off delivery schedule binding?

This is a contractual matter that must be clearly regulated before the schedule starts. Tiering is customary: near-term periods are binding, mid-term periods are partially binding, distant periods are planning values only. From the bindingness date onwards, quantity and date changes frequently apply only against cost reimbursement.

How often is a call-off delivery schedule updated?

In series production, typically weekly, sometimes daily where release windows are tight. The update cycle should be shorter than the supplier's shortest binding lead time. Automatic EDI transmission supports short cycles without additional effort.

What advantages does a call-off delivery schedule offer suppliers?

Suppliers gain planning certainty for material disposition, capacity and staffing, and can cover the long lead times of their upstream suppliers. This lowers risk and cost, which frequently has a positive effect on prices and priority in bottleneck situations. The prerequisite is a reliable, stable schedule issued by the customer.

Which KPIs belong to the call-off delivery schedule?

Key metrics are on-time-in-full delivery performance on dates and quantities, schedule stability as the change rate of binding positions, and the supplier's confirmation rate. Inventory and frustration metrics are used additionally. These values also serve as the basis for service credits (SLA) in supplier contracts.