



Barron Wood Distribution Limited

GUIDE

A Guide to Outsourced Transport

What you need to know about contract logistics and the outsourcing process

September 2026 



Introduction

Transport operations rarely stay simple for long. Delivery windows tighten, customer expectations shift, and the systems that worked well enough a couple of years ago start to show their limits.

For many businesses, the question eventually becomes less about tweaking the current setup and more about how transport should be run at all – in-house, through a traditional third-party logistics provider, or via a dedicated outsourced transport partner.

Each route comes with different trade-offs around cost and operational control. There’s no single right answer for every business. What matters is understanding what each model really involves before deciding which one fits yours.

This guide sets out to do just that. Over the following pages, we’ll cover:

- What outsourced transport management means in practice, and how it differs from simply booking haulage
- Which sectors and business types tend to benefit most, and where the model may not be the right fit
- What good practice looks like in an outsourced transport relationship
- How the process typically works, from the first conversation through to becoming an established client
- Why an asset-light, outsourced model can outperform running an in-house fleet or working with a generalist 3PL
- What bwd specifically offers businesses considering this route

What is Outsourced Transport Management?

Outsourced transport management is the practice of appointing a specialist partner to manage some or all of a business’s transport operation. This is instead of buying haulage capacity on a job-by-job basis.

Haulage on its own is straightforward. A customer needs goods moved from A to B, and a haulier provides the vehicle and driver to do it, with little thinking involved beyond pickup and delivery.

Outsourced transport management goes further. It covers the planning behind each movement, the procurement of the right carrier or vehicle for the job, ongoing performance monitoring, and the resolution of problems as they arise – for example, a delayed collection, site access issue, or unexpected spike in demand.

Likewise, there is a commitment to continuous improvement, with performance tracked against agreed KPIs and reviewed over time.

	Haulage	Outsourced transport management
Scope	Point A to point B	The full transport operation
Planning	Minimal, job by job	Ongoing and forward-looking
Accountability	Delivery only	Tracked against agreed KPIs
Relationship	Transactional	Medium to long-term partnership
Improvement	Not built in	A continuous, ongoing focus

This differs from a traditional 3PL model too. Where 3PL providers often bundle transport with warehousing and fulfilment, outsourced transport management is a transport-specific discipline, built around planning and carrier accountability as opposed to end-to-end supply chain fulfilment.

In practice, this means businesses gain more than a supplier. They gain an extension of their own transport function that takes on the operational and administrative weight of running transport. At the same time, they remain accountable for the outcomes that matter most – cost and service.

Read More

For a closer look at contract versus transactional logistics, see our blog:

How contract logistics can unlock supply chain efficiency.

[View Blog](#)



How Contract Logistics Can Unlock Supply Chain Efficiency

When businesses look at their logistics needs, there's much more to consider than just moving products around. Different logistics models work for different situations, and getting these decisions right can make a real difference to how well your business performs and grows.

[READ MORE »](#)



Who is Outsourced Transport Management for?

Outsourced transport management is utilised across a wide range of sectors, though the pressures driving that need vary considerably from one industry to the next.

- **Construction** – site access requirements, specialist fleet needs (cranes, Moffett Mouny forklifts, drawbar trailers), and significant seasonal peaks and troughs
- **Retail distribution** – RDC compliance, strict booking discipline, and surge capacity during peak and promotional periods
- **FMCG** – tight delivery windows, high OTIF expectations, and shared-user efficiency across large volumes
- **Industrial and engineering** – heavy and oversized loads, and complex, multi-stage consignments
- **Equipment pooling** – asset recovery and coordination across a wide network of sites
- **Paper, print and packaging** – high-volume, bulk material handling
- **Waste and recycling** – compliance-heavy operations involving specialist material handling

There is, however, an important common thread. Sector-specific expertise reduces onboarding risk and speeds up how quickly a new transport arrangement beds in.

When outsourcing might not be right

It is also important to acknowledge that outsourced transport management is not the right fit for every business. For example:

- Low logistics spend, where the cost of setting up an outsourced arrangement outweighs any realistic saving
- Ad hoc or transactional needs, where sourcing from multiple providers as required already works well
- Stable, predictable operations with little seasonal or demand volatility
- Strong in-house transport expertise, where a reorganisation may achieve more than outsourcing would

In these cases, a smaller-scale review or a different kind of support could well be more effective than a full outsourced solution.

Outsourced Transport Management – Best Practice

Not every outsourced transport provider operates to the same standard. Here is what to look for when assessing a potential partner.

Communication and visibility

- Clear, proactive communication built into the everyday relationship
- Regular reporting that gives full visibility of real performance

Performance and accountability

- Defined, measurable KPIs, agreed and tracked from the outset
- A sustained track record of consistent performance over time
- Strong compliance processes across safety, regulation and data

Flexibility and partnership

- Scalability that flexes with volume, without constant renegotiation
- A genuine focus on continuous improvement beyond initial implementation
- Collaboration that feels like a partnership, built on shared goals

Taken together, these credentials should form some of the practical checks you make before committing to a partner.

Read More

For a deeper dive, see our blog:

Outsourcing transport: when to partner with a UK transport management company.

[View Blog](#)



Outsourcing Transport: When to Partner with a UK Transport Management Company

There's something reassuring about running your own transport fleet. You control the vehicles, manage the drivers, set the schedules. But here's what often gets overlooked: that control is expensive. Fleet management eats time. Driver recruitment is getting harder. Regulatory compliance shifts constantly. Route planning needs daily attention. Performance monitoring



Read More

For a fuller breakdown of what defines a dependable transport partner, see our blog:

What defines a reliable UK transport company in 2026?

[View Blog](#)



What Defines a Reliable UK Transport Company in 2026

Ask most businesses what they want from a transport company and the answer tends to contain a combination of the words on time, undamaged, and consistency.

That is still the baseline – but it is not the whole picture. The supply chains those deliveries move through have become harder to manage, windows have tightened, and the commercial consequences of a missed slot are more

Did You Know?

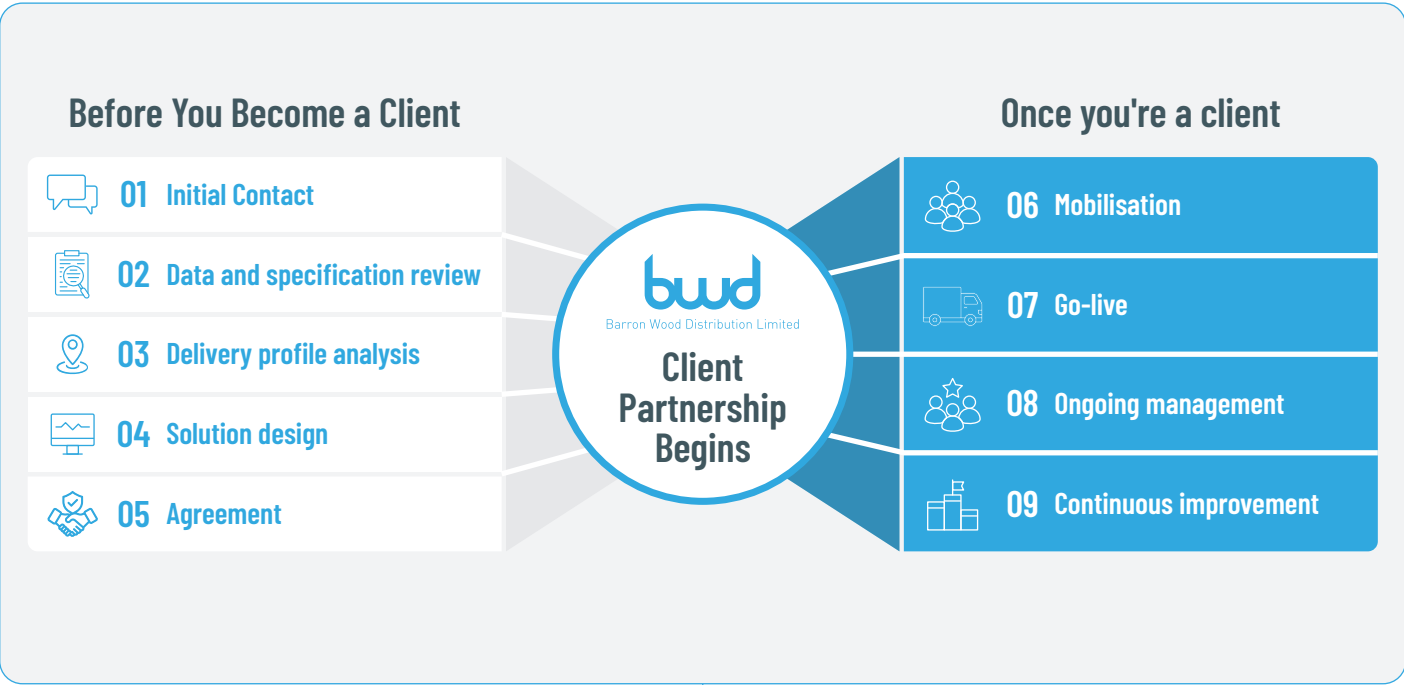
bwd's on time, in full (OTIF) performance stands at **99.3%**



99.3% OTIF

The bwd Process

Every bwd engagement looks a little different, so what follows is typical of what to expect rather than a fixed formula. In practice, the process falls into two broad stages: what happens before you become a client, and how the relationship runs once you are.



Why Choose Asset-Light Outsourced Transport Management?

Many of the benefits of outsourced transport management come from the model itself. It draws on shared networks, specialist expertise and structured KPI accountability, rather than being tied to the fixed assets and fixed costs of a single fleet.

Even so, choosing the right partner still matters, since how well that model is executed shapes how much value a business sees from it. Done well, outsourcing can transform the cost and risk equation of running transport, while significantly reducing the internal resource and energy needed to keep it moving.

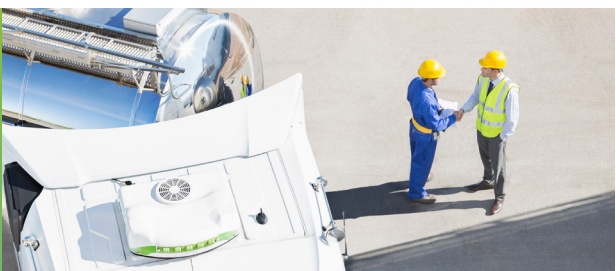
Here is a breakdown of the key advantages.

Cost and commercial flexibility

- Lower cost than running a dedicated fleet – no vehicles to buy, and no driver recruitment or training overhead to carry
- The ability to scale up or down without being left with stranded cost
- Transparent, variable-cost commercial models rather than fixed, inflexible contracts
- Shared-load efficiency, reducing empty running across the network

Did You Know?

Chep uses bwd's milk run and consolidation planning to combine collections across multiple sites. This is cutting empty mileage and improving cost per movement.





Service reliability and control

- Improved service performance and OTIF, underpinned by KPI accountability
- Stronger compliance on safety and regulation, backed by robust data practices
- Reduced risk compared with managing multiple ad hoc providers directly

Reduced complexity and management overhead

- Carrier selection and management taken off your plate
- Lower internal administrative burden
- Improved reporting, visibility and data accuracy

Specialist expertise and reach

- Sector-specific knowledge across vehicle types and regulatory requirements
- Breadth of service, including traction, UK-wide trunking, customs management and carrier sourcing
- Broader geographical access across the UK and Europe, where customs and regulatory differences, as well as language barriers, add further complexity
- Access to a wider carrier network than most in-house or single-provider setups

Did You Know?

Aldi, Asda and Danone all rely on bwd's peak and seasonal planning support to manage demand spikes without compromising service. Of course, none of this comes without some adjustment. Outsourcing transport means letting go of a degree of day-to-day control, in return for the cost and service gains outlined above. It's a trade-off you will need to consider carefully before reaching a decision.

The bwd blog explores these themes in detail:

How dedicated and shared logistics resources can be combined to balance cost and service certainty.



Finding the Right Balance: Dedicated and Shared Resources in Logistics

Businesses today operate complex supply chains that demand a range of logistics solutions to fulfil them effectively. From regular, high-volume movements to one-off deliveries, seasonal peaks to steady-state operations, no one size fits all approach can address every requirement efficiently.

[View Blog](#)

Why hybrid commercial models offer more flexibility than a single, fixed contract type



Hybrid Logistics Models: When and Why They Work

Many businesses have logistics needs that don't fit into neat boxes. You might have some regular, predictable volumes that need reliable service, but then there are seasonal rushes, one-off projects or unexpected spikes in demand that throw everything off balance.

[View Blog](#)

How national network coverage solves problems that regional operators can't



UK transport company: How national coverage solves regional logistics challenges

Businesses that operate across the UK often reach a point where their transport arrangements stop keeping pace with them. A regional transport company that once covered the bases can start to show its limitations – gaps in coverage, inconsistent service in certain lanes, or an inability to flex when volumes spike. The result is

[View Blog](#)



What Does bwd Offer?

No two clients need exactly the same support, and bwd's service offering reflects that. Rather than being prescribed a fixed package, the areas below can be combined and tailored to suit the shape of your operation.

Planning and procurement

- Transport planning and route optimisation
- Carrier procurement through an approved subcontractor network
- Rate management and cost control

Reporting and relationship

- Performance reporting and KPI tracking
- Dedicated account management support
- Continuous improvement, with your account team using reporting data to identify and propose changes over time

Day-to-day operations

- Daily transport coordination and delivery monitoring
- Booking and scheduling support

Proof of delivery and administrative support

Service breadth

- Contract logistics and network logistics, combined where it suits the operation
- UK-wide coverage and European freight
- Customs management for cross-border movements
- Returns and reverse logistics handling

Everything bwd does is underpinned by five principles, which guide the way partnerships are built and services delivered.

- **Scalable flexibility** – capacity that adapts to changing demand without long-term commitment
- **Operational stability** – consistent, reliable service even as volumes fluctuate
- **Complexity absorption** – reducing the administrative and planning burden carried by your team
- **Commercial agility** – flexible commercial models tailored to how your business operates
- **Sector excellence** – deep, sector-specific expertise applied to your operation



Conclusion

Choosing how to manage transport, whether in-house, through a 3PL or via a dedicated outsourced transport partner, is not a decision to take lightly. Getting it right can transform cost and service performance and significantly reduce the amount of time and effort transport takes to run.

If outsourcing feels like the right direction for your business, the difference lies in choosing a partner with the sector expertise, process and flexibility to match how you operate.

To talk through your transport requirements and explore whether outsourcing could work for your business, get in touch with the bwd team today.





Barron Wood Distribution Limited

GUIDE



Barron Wood Distribution Limited

Southport New Road
Tarleton
Preston
England
PR4 6HY

T 01772 610160
E sales@bwd.co.uk
W bwd.co.uk

