Delivery Schedule Agreement: Flexibly plannable framework contracts for series supply

A Delivery Schedule Agreement (DSA) is a long-term supply contract that governs the binding acceptance of quantities over a planning horizon, while the specific delivery dates are flexibly adjusted by call-off. In practice, it is the central control instrument between framework agreement and individual purchase order, especially in the automotive, machinery and electronics industries. The term is often equated with the German „Abrufvertrag“ or „Abrufauftrag“ (call-off contract/call-off order) and is closely related to systems contracts or call-off arrangements. For buyers, the DSA combines security of supply with planning flexibility

As of October 2026 · amplifa-marketplace.ai/en/glossary/delivery-schedule-agreement

– and at the same time requires clear agreements on quantity corridors, change processes and expiry dates.

Key facts at a glance

01 A Delivery Schedule Agreement binds total quantities in the long term, while call-offs determine the specific delivery dates at short notice.

02 Typical structure: a firm quantity corridor, several planning horizons (firm, sliding and open zones) and defined call-off deadlines.

03 Key contract contents include price fixing, quantity flexibility, stockholding obligations, change management and expiry rules for quantities not called off.

04 In practice, frequently used for series and standard parts that are procured continuously and cause high set-up costs at the supplier.

05 Success indicators are call-off accuracy, on-time delivery and inventory coverage on both sides of the supply chain.

06 Legally, call-off contracts are regarded as a special form of contract; quantity and deadline provisions should be legally reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Definition: Delivery Schedule Agreement

A Delivery Schedule Agreement is a framework supply contract in which a supplier undertakes to deliver an agreed total quantity over a defined period without every individual date being fixed from the outset. Execution takes place via call-offs placed by the customer within agreed lead times and quantity corridors. The DSA thus combines the binding effect of a framework agreement with the flexibility of ongoing scheduling.

Distinction from the framework agreement and the individual purchase order

A classic framework agreement governs prices and terms but often does not oblige the buyer to accept. An individual purchase order, by contrast, covers only a specific requirement. The DSA lies in between: the total quantity or a quantity corridor becomes binding, while scheduling remains flexible. For the supplier, this creates planning certainty for capacities and material pre-production; for the buyer, the recurring ordering process is eliminated.

- Framework agreement: terms binding, quantities usually non-binding.
- Individual purchase order: quantity and date binding, no long-term reference.
- DSA: quantity corridor binding, call-offs determine dates and partial quantities.

Typical fields of application

Delivery Schedule Agreements are typically concluded for series parts, standard components and raw materials with continuous demand – for example bought-in parts in contract manufacturing or standard sheet metal, fasteners and semiconductor components. They are particularly suitable when the supplier has long lead times or high set-up costs and the buyer's demand fluctuates seasonally or by order. DSAs are less common with customer-specific individual parts or project business.

- Automotive supply industry: series parts over model lifecycles.
- Mechanical engineering: standard components for several product lines.
- Electronics: long-runner parts with long procurement times.

Methods and approach: setting up a Delivery Schedule Agreement

A functioning DSA requires a clear contract architecture: quantities, horizons, call-off mechanics and change rules must fit together. In practice, a multi-stage approach has proven effective, spanning from demand analysis to ongoing monitoring.

Define demand analysis and quantity corridor

The starting point is a robust demand forecast, ideally aligned with sales, production and, where applicable, a consensus forecast. On this basis, buyer and supplier define a quantity corridor, typically with a lower limit of around 70 to 90 per cent of the forecast quantity and an upper limit of 110 to 130 per cent. Within this corridor, the contract prices apply; outside it, renegotiation or a quantity adjustment

is required. It is important to link the DSA to the order prioritisation of one's own production so that call-offs reflect realistic priorities.

- Evaluate forecast history and planning data.
- Define minimum and maximum offtake quantities per period.
- Regulate cumulative acceptance over the contract term.

Planning horizons and call-off mechanics

A tiered horizon model has proven its worth: in the firm zone (e.g. the first four weeks), call-offs are immutable; in the sliding zone (e.g. weeks five to twelve), quantity changes are possible within tolerances; in the open zone, the call-off serves as a forecast without any obligation to accept. This includes defined call-off deadlines, a standardised transmission format – in electronic data interchange, usually cXML or EDI messages – and a binding call-off confirmation by the supplier. Before concluding the contract, a supplier capacity check is recommended to ensure that peak call-offs can actually be handled.

- Firm zone: fixed dates and quantities.
- Sliding zone: changes with defined deadlines and tolerances.
- Open zone: forecast character, no obligation to accept.

Price, change and evidence provisions

Prices are either fixed over the term or adjusted via indexation formulas; both variants are common in practice. A well-drafted change order clause governs what happens when the buyer changes designs, bills of materials or call-off quantities – including costs for near-production inventories and upstream materials at the supplier. For evidence and settlement purposes, the contract should contain performance and delivery documentation, such as proof of performance per call-off, as well as the applicable Incoterms including a clear designation (e.g. Incoterms DDP or CPT).

- Agree price fixing duration or index clause.
- Change order clause with deadlines and cost sharing.
- Clearly define Incoterms, transfer point and documentation.

Key KPIs: controlling and measuring call-off contracts

DSAs can only be managed effectively if both sides use the same metrics. The key measures concern the buyer's call-off quality and the supplier's delivery performance – and should be discussed regularly in the joint review, ideally anchored in procurement controlling.

Call-off and delivery quality

Call-off accuracy measures how far actually called-off quantities deviate from the original forecasts; values below around 90 per cent indicate planning problems. Conversely, on-time delivery (OTD) shows the proportion of call-offs that arrive on time and in the correct quantity – in practice, over 95 to 98 per cent is often targeted. In addition, date deviations in days and the shortfall ratio provide a

differentiated picture.

- Call-off accuracy: plan-to-actual deviation of call-offs.
- On-time delivery: call-offs delivered on time, as a percentage.
- Shortfall ratio: quantities not delivered relative to call-off volume.

Inventory and capital commitment

Since DSAs favour continuous delivery, they typically reduce safety stocks. This is measured via the inventory coverage of the called-off materials and the capital tied up in the goods receipt warehouse. For the supplier, capacity utilisation is the corresponding metric: a well-designed DSA smooths its load profile and reduces costly peak loads. Both perspectives belong in the joint supplier review.

- Inventory coverage: days or weeks of average stockholding.
- Capital commitment: value of inventories tied up by the DSA.
- Capacity utilisation at the supplier as the counterpart.

Risks and controls: typical pitfalls and countermeasures

Call-off contracts shift risks between the partners: the supplier bears quantity and sales risks, the buyer procurement and expiry risks. Without clear provisions, disputes arise over quantities not called off, short-term changes or quality defects.

Quantity and scheduling risks

The biggest risk is the threat of unsold residual quantities or, conversely, unmet peak demand. Remedies include realistic quantity corridors, cumulative offtake provisions, compensation clauses and a documented call-off history. Short-term call-off changes should only be possible against defined risk premiums or flexibility quotas; otherwise, contractual penalties or refusal to deliver loom.

- Review take-or-pay provisions for minimum offtake.
- Flexibility quotas instead of unlimited change requests.
- Define escalation paths for call-off conflicts.

Quality, compliance and supplier failure

Even under a DSA, the buyer remains responsible for incoming quality and complaint processes; a functioning control of nonconforming product determines how well shortfall situations are managed. Compliance topics such as conflict minerals or reporting obligations under the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) impose data delivery obligations on both sides and should be anchored in the contract. Against supplier failure, dual sourcing, safety stocks and an audit plan with regular supplier evaluations help; for demanding components, an Ishikawa diagram supports systematic root cause analysis of recurring problems.

- Agree complaint and blocked stock processes.
- Contractually fix compliance data obligations (e.g. raw material origin).

- Maintain an audit plan and a second source for critical parts.

Contractual and commercial controls

Clear provisions are important regarding expiry dates for quantities not called off, extension options and the relationship to ongoing individual purchase orders. Commercially, the DSA should be integrated into payment terms and cash management, for example within the framework of days payable outstanding (DPO) optimisation; if the buyer pays with early payment discount, this can be used as negotiating leverage against quantity commitments. All legal and tax questions – for example on the accounting treatment of firm acceptance obligations – should be professionally reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

- Regulate expiry and run-out of residual quantities.
- Use payment terms and early payment discounts strategically.
- Annual contract review with KPI evaluation.

Current developments: digitalisation, resilience and sustainability

Call-off contracts are under dual pressure to adapt: supply chains must become more resilient, and sustainability requirements increasingly affect procurement contracts. Both are changing the design and management of DSAs.

Digital call-off processes

More and more companies transmit call-offs electronically – via EDI, cXML or supplier portals – and integrate them directly into ERP and MES systems. This reduces media discontinuities, accelerates call-off confirmations and makes deviations immediately visible. Advanced set-ups use rolling forecasts that are automatically fed from sales and production data and continuously update the open zone of the DSA.

- Electronic call-off transmission and confirmation as standard.
- Automatic reconciliation of call-offs, inventory and capacity.
- Supplier's ability to respond as a selection criterion.

Resilience and sustainability as contract content

Since the disruptions of recent years, DSAs have been optimised less for minimum price and more for security of supply: shorter firm horizons, more safety stocks at the supplier or contractually committed capacity reserves. At the same time, sustainability requirements are moving into the contract – from CO2 pricing on transport- and production-related emissions to proof of origin and reporting obligations under the CSRD. Buyers are well advised to anchor these topics early in tenders and the category governance of the relevant commodity group, rather than negotiating them retrospectively into existing contracts.

- Contractually agree capacity commitments and safety buffers.

- Define emission and origin data obligations.
- Integrate sustainability criteria into category governance.

Typical metrics

Metric	Typical value
Call-off accuracy	> 90 % *Plan-to-actual conformity of call-offs; values below this indicate planning problems.*
On-time delivery (OTD)	> 95–98 % *Share of call-offs delivered on time and in full quantity.*
Inventory coverage	typically 2–8 weeks *To be interpreted according to the criticality of the part and lead time.*
Call-off confirmation time	< 48 h *Time until the supplier's binding response.*

Practical example

A medium-sized machinery manufacturer had previously sourced stamped and bent parts via around 1,200 individual purchase orders per year, causing high process costs and unreliable delivery dates. The team introduced Delivery Schedule Agreements with three-tier horizons and a quantity corridor of 85 to 115 per cent of the forecast quantity for the twelve A-suppliers of the material group. Since then, call-offs have been transmitted electronically, with confirmation within 48 hours. After two quarters, on-time delivery improved noticeably, inventory coverage for the parts concerned fell, and the process effort for purchase orders was significantly reduced.

- Consolidation of individual purchase orders into twelve DSAs with a quantity corridor.
- Three-tier horizons: four weeks firm, eight weeks sliding, remainder as forecast.
- Electronic call-off transmission with binding 48-hour confirmation.
- Quarterly review of call-off accuracy and on-time delivery with each supplier.

Conclusion

The Delivery Schedule Agreement is the workhorse of series procurement: it combines binding quantity commitments with scheduling flexibility and relieves both sides of the day-to-day burden of individual orders. Success depends less on the contract paper than on discipline in forecasting, call-offs and joint KPI evaluation. Those who define quantity corridors, horizons, change clauses and compliance obligations cleanly gain security of supply without excessive inventories. At the same time, the DSA should be reviewed regularly and adapted to market, sustainability and capacity developments. In this

way, the call-off contract evolves from an administrative instrument into a genuine lever for cost, resilience and supplier partnership.

Frequently asked questions

? What is a Delivery Schedule Agreement?

A Delivery Schedule Agreement is a long-term supply contract that bindingly fixes a total quantity or a quantity corridor, while the specific delivery dates are determined by ongoing call-offs. It combines the binding effect of a framework agreement with the flexibility of ongoing scheduling. In German-speaking markets, this is often referred to as an Abrufvertrag (call-off contract) or Abrufauftrag (call-off order).

? What is the difference between a call-off contract and a framework agreement?

A framework agreement primarily governs prices and terms but, as a rule, does not oblige the buyer to accept specific quantities. With a call-off contract, by contrast, the total quantity or a corridor is binding, and execution takes place via staggered call-offs. This gives both parties greater planning certainty, while the buyer retains flexibility in scheduling.

? What are the disadvantages of a call-off contract for the buyer?

The buyer commits to minimum quantities and bears the risk of having to accept or pay for remaining quantities if demand falls. In addition, fixed horizons make short-term changes in demand difficult, and change costs arising from design modifications can become expensive. Mitigating measures include realistic corridors, flexibility quotas and a well-drafted change order clause.

? How does a call-off order work in an ERP system?

In the ERP system, the call-off contract is first created with total quantity, term and prices. The system then generates call-off items from the requirements plan, which are transmitted to the supplier as binding delivery schedules within the contract parameters. Goods receipt and invoice verification are carried out against the contract, often electronically via EDI or cXML.

? When is a Delivery Schedule Agreement worthwhile?

It is worthwhile where demand for identical parts is high and continuous, lead times are long or the supplier incurs high set-up costs, and where procurement volume is significant enough to offer negotiating leverage. In highly volatile or project-based business, individual purchase orders or flexible framework agreements are usually more suitable. A demand analysis covering at least one year indicates whether it is appropriate.

Find the right suppliers on Amplifa

Verified industrial suppliers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Describe your requirement and receive comparable offers.

amplifa-marketplace.ai