



The Highest-Paid Roles in Freight Forwarding Revealed by New Salary Analysis

New data highlights demand for specialist freight forwarding talent as employers compete for professionals with commercial expertise and operational capability.

BRISTOL, UNITED KINGDOM, June 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Salary trends across the [freight forwarding industry](#) are highlighting where employers place the greatest value and which skill sets continue to command premium compensation.

Analysis of placement data from Freight Appointments covering the United States market between 2020 and 2025 shows that freight sales professionals, air freight specialists, and export operators remain among the highest-paid professionals within the sector.

As supply chains become increasingly complex and customer expectations continue to rise, organisations are placing greater emphasis on hiring professionals who can combine technical expertise with commercial impact.

The analysis identified the following average salaries across key freight forwarding disciplines:

Freight forwarding Sales Executives & Business Development Managers: \$103,947
Operations Specialists: \$65,850

Breakdown of operations salaries by mode & service:

[Air Freight Operations Specialists](#): \$69,500

vs.

Ocean Freight Operations Specialists: \$63,200

[Export Operations Specialists](#): \$67,900

vs.

Import Operations Specialists: \$62,800

The findings suggest that employers continue to reward professionals who can directly influence revenue growth, customer retention, operational efficiency, and service delivery. While this is typically associated only with salespeople, operators hold relationships that are often able to be transferred or introduced to a new employer too.

"Sales professionals who have a track record of generating revenue from new logos and hold genuine long-term client relationships remain highly sought after," said Lewis Bunn, Co-Founder and Director.

"At the same time, air freight specialists continue to earn higher salaries due to the complexity, urgency, and customer expectations associated with air cargo operations."

Why Sales and Air Freight Continue to Command a Premium

Revenue generation remains one of the strongest drivers of compensation within freight forwarding.

Businesses continue to invest heavily in professionals capable of securing new business opportunities, developing strategic customer relationships, and delivering sustainable account growth. This has helped sales professionals maintain a significant salary advantage over many operational functions for obvious reasons. With that said, Sales Executives and Business Development Managers with good tenure and not too many moves stand out from the crowd. Too many salespeople move every two or three years, and any more than two or three jobs within a ten year period significantly drops the amount of interest their profiles attract, and the salary they can expect.

Within operations, air freight continues to attract some of the highest compensation packages.

Air cargo environments require professionals to manage time-critical shipments, high-value freight, regulatory compliance requirements, and demanding customer expectations. These factors contribute to a premium for candidates with proven experience in air freight operations.

Salary Growth Across the Freight Forwarding Sector

The research also highlights broader salary growth across the industry over the past five years.

Average operations salaries increased from \$57,389 in 2020 to \$68,513 in 2025, representing growth of 19%.

Sales salaries experienced similar progression, increasing from \$88,061 in 2020 to \$103,947 in 2025, an increase of 18%.

Within specific operational functions, air freight professionals experienced some of the strongest salary progression, with average earnings increasing from \$61,200 in 2020 to \$74,900 in 2025.

Ocean freight salaries also increased during the same period, rising from \$54,800 to \$63,500.

The sustained upward trend reflects ongoing competition for experienced talent as freight forwarding businesses seek professionals capable of navigating increasingly sophisticated global supply chains.

Export Roles Continue to Outperform Import Positions

The analysis found that export professionals continue to earn approximately 8% more than their counterparts in import operations.

This salary premium is often linked to the broader commercial and operational responsibilities associated with export functions, particularly within businesses managing international trade lanes, compliance requirements, and time-sensitive shipments.

Export specialists frequently operate across customer service, operations, and commercial functions, making their expertise particularly valuable in competitive freight markets.

What Employers Need to Know

Compensation remains an important factor in attracting experienced freight forwarding professionals, but salary alone is rarely enough to secure top talent.

The most sought-after candidates increasingly possess:

- Specialist trade lane expertise
- Multimodal freight experience
- Strong customer relationship management capabilities
- Freight technology and systems knowledge with CargoWise exposure being a stand-out point for many forwarders
- Commercial awareness alongside operational expertise

As a result, many employers are placing greater emphasis on long-term career development, leadership opportunities, workplace flexibility, and organisational stability alongside competitive compensation packages.

"Businesses are increasingly looking for professionals who can add value beyond their core responsibilities," added Lewis.

"Candidates with specialist trade lane knowledge, strong customer relationships, multimodal experience, and freight technology expertise are consistently attracting stronger compensation packages than generalist candidates."

Executive Hiring Trends Continue to Evolve

The findings also support a broader trend emerging across freight forwarding and logistics recruitment: organisations are placing greater importance on specialist leadership and commercial capability.

As businesses expand internationally, invest in technology, and navigate changing customer demands, executive search activity continues to grow across senior operations, commercial, vertical, and strategic leadership functions.

For many organisations, securing the right leadership talent has become a critical component of long-term growth, operational resilience, and competitive advantage.

Industry Outlook for 2026

Salary growth is expected to remain steady throughout 2026, particularly across air freight, freight sales, project logistics, aerospace, pharmaceuticals, and time-critical logistics sectors.

As supply chains become increasingly specialised, employers are expected to continue investing in professionals who can combine technical expertise, commercial awareness, and leadership capability.

About Freight Appointments

Freight Appointments is a specialist freight forwarding and logistics recruitment consultancy supporting employers and candidates across North America, Europe, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

Focused exclusively on freight forwarding, logistics, and supply chain recruitment, the business supports hiring across operations, sales, management, and executive leadership functions. Alongside contingency recruitment, the company delivers executive search solutions for senior leadership appointments, helping organisations secure the talent required to support growth, transformation, and long-term success.

Since launch, the business has supported more than 800 successful hires, hired over 400 import, export, and customs specialists, and negotiated more than \$52 million in candidate compensation packages.

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