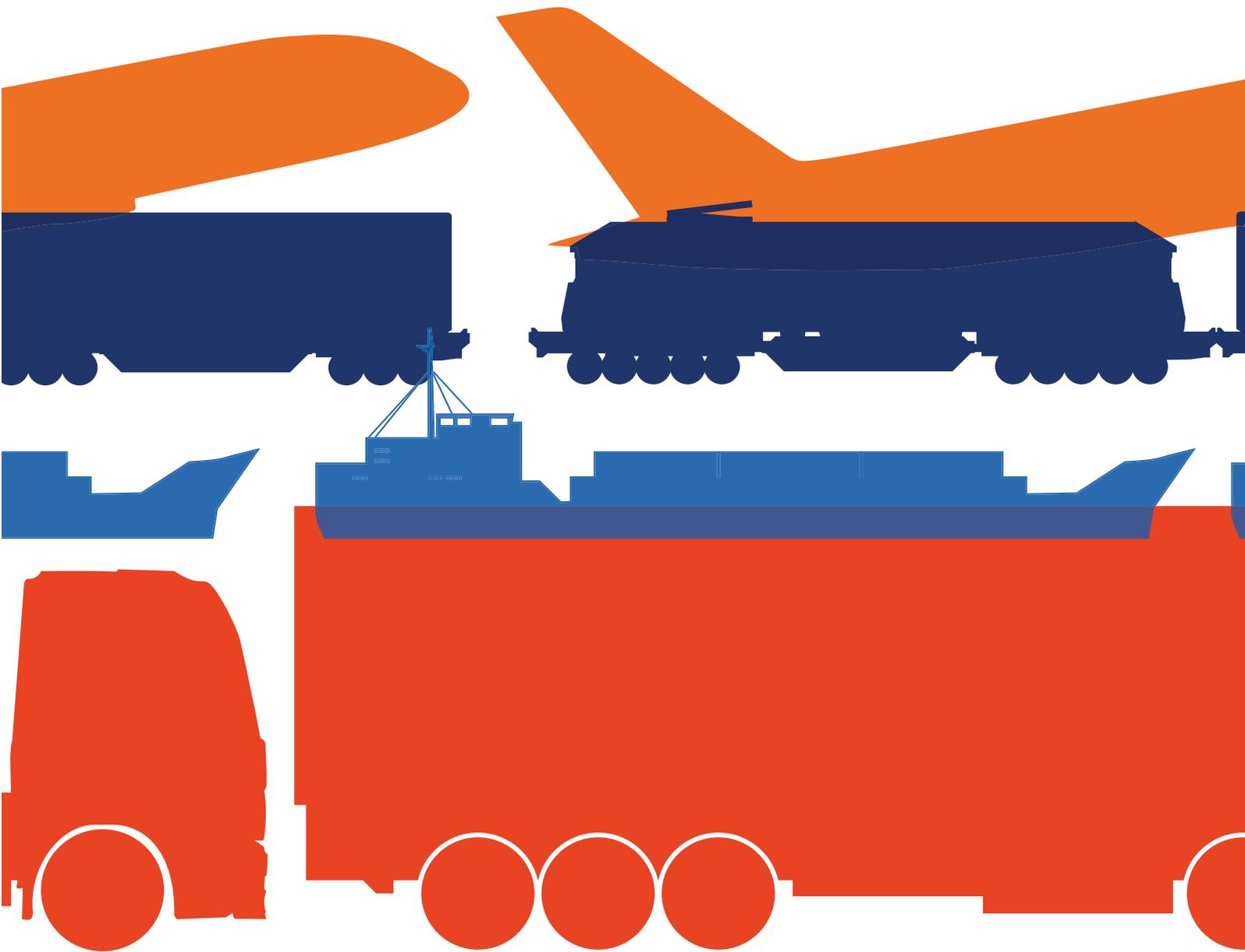


An International Logistics Future For You

Career opportunities
managing the transportation
of goods around the world



Take a look around you:

the clothes you're wearing were probably made in Asia... be Finnish... your PC was made in the USA... the chips Cyprus... even the chair you're sitting on was probably



In today's global economy we buy our everyday needs from all around the world, and we sell our own goods around the world too. It's the international logistics industry that transports these goods to their markets around the globe, on time and in tiptop condition... using ships, planes, trucks and railways. It's a huge industry, employing hundreds of thousands of people in a wide variety of jobs. It offers interesting and varied opportunities, the chance to progress within a large organisation or - if you have an entrepreneurial streak - to start your own company.

Freight logistics offers a good degree of job security. Even during periods of economic downturn, there is still huge demand for the movement of goods around the world. Many people who come into the logistics industry arrive by accident, but then stay for a lifelong career. Perhaps it's because of the constant exposure to exotic places, or the 'buzz' of helping customers to meet tight delivery deadlines. Certainly, freight is a 'people' business that possesses a unique 'family feel' and an active social life. And there are exciting and rewarding opportunities for those who are prepared to do their best for employers and customers.





your shoes may come from Italy... your mobile could you are eating were made from potatoes grown in made in Sweden!

What Sort of Company might I Work for?

There are many kinds of companies in the international logistics business, each offering its own selection of work opportunities. Here are the main ones:

Freight Forwarding Agents

These are the companies that assist exporters or importers by collecting and delivering between them and the shipping line or airline, buying 'space' on sailings or flights, handling documentation etc. and dealing with HM Revenue & Customs. There are several thousand freight forwarding offices in the UK, belonging to large companies (with 30 or more branches) down to single-outlet operators. Some specialised forwarders deal with areas such as transportation of racing cars, moving film and TV crews and their equipment, or handling perishable goods such as fruit. There are also a few 'wholesalers' who are set up to deal only with other forwarders.

Work will include enquiries and customer service, export negotiation and reservations, sales and marketing, and operations. As you progress, there are opportunities to specialise in specific countries, industries and procedures. There may also be opportunities for overseas travel and postings.

Logistics companies are a new breed of forwarder, specialising in the timely movement of raw materials and commodities along the supply chain from origin to final destination, by the most cost-effective means possible. They work mostly for major multinationals, and employ highly sophisticated IT systems and processes.

Road Transport Operators

These are the most visible element of the transportation industry, often providing the essential first and last links in the international supply chain. There are many companies in this sector, ranging from small operators with a single base and a few vehicles to major companies with fleets of many thousands based around the UK. Work can include operations, sales and marketing, customer liaison, loading, domestic or international driving or maintenance and management of the fleet itself.

Express Operators

These are effectively forwarders too, but dealing in high volumes of small and urgent packages. DHL, UPS, Fedex and TNT dominate this market, but there are also many smaller operators. Opportunities, training and progression are often better in the large companies.

Airlines

The majority of air cargo is moved on passenger aircraft with freight loaded in containers and carried, like baggage, in under-floor holds. Additionally, destinations with high volumes of cargo are served by freighters or 'cargo only' aircraft. In some circumstances an entire aircraft may be chartered to move a special cargo project. Historically air freight was mostly used for very urgent high-value or perishable goods. Nowadays the use of air cargo routinely forms part of distribution patterns, and typical examples of high demand and high value goods would include personal computers, mobile phones, and other high technology products. Other commodities typically moved by air are fresh fruit and vegetables, due to their perishable nature, precious stones and metals, fashion goods and all kinds of urgent spare parts.

The UK has some of the busiest international airports in the world and as a result there are many international carriers from other countries with their own offices or handling facilities in this country, in addition to British airlines. This means that there are numerous career opportunities with very large global airlines, as well as those with more modest representative offices. Working for an airline affords the possibility of transferring to other 'stations' in their network, and of course the availability of travel, either for business or leisure, with discounted staff fares.

An increasing number of airlines now sub-contract both their sales and handling activities to contractors known as General Sales Agents, and General Handling Agents, who have become quite large organisations in their own right.

Work here would include customer service, reservations, quotations, sales and marketing, operations and handling. Air cargo offices are located at many UK airports, with the largest air cargo community being situated at London Heathrow airport.

Shipping Lines

Over 80% of today's world trade is moved around the globe by sea. Shipping lines are the companies that own the vessels used for transporting these goods. Some are British companies, but most are large foreign operators. Ocean freight is used for most goods that are not urgent, because it is a relatively low cost option. Most goods are now placed into large metal boxes called 'containers' for ease of handling, and carried on board giant container ships. There are also specialist carriers who operate bulk vessels for grain, gas and oil, with other ships especially built to carry newly produced cars, and ro-ro (roll on, roll off) ferries designed to move trucks on short sea crossings.

Work can include quotations and reservations, sales and marketing, or operations.

Physical Handling

Ports and terminals that handle ships, handling agents who handle airlines, warehousing and distribution companies, and many other sectors of the freight industry offer a variety of office-based, warehousing and driving posts.

Exporters and Importers

Some commercial companies export or import such high volumes of goods that they need their own in-house staff to liaise with shipping lines, airlines and freight forwarders. Entry to such positions is usually with previous forwarding experience, and progression is limited due to the generally small size of such departments.

Work would include internal liaison with buyers or production departments, arranging shipments with carriers or freight forwarders, and dealing with HM Revenue & Customs.

Getting into the World of Freight... and getting on from School

Many companies will employ bright school-leavers with good basic qualifications and the right attitude. It is really a matter of applying to as many firms as possible within your chosen geographical area: the best prospects of success are through the larger forwarding companies and shipping line offices.

Once in your first job, you can supplement on-the-job training by entering a Modern Apprenticeship/NVQ training scheme. NVQs are available in many related subjects. NVQs increase your appeal to employers, and may result in better salaries and opportunities.



British International Freight Association

Redfern House
Browells Lane
Feltham
Middlesex
TW13 7EP
United Kingdom

T: +44 (0)20 8844 2266
F: +44 (0)20 8890 5546
E: bifa@bifa.org
W: www.bifa.org



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From Further Education

There are now a wide variety of relevant college and degree courses in international trade, business and logistics management which can lead to a fast-track development programme within some of the larger freight organisations.

You can also study while working through part-time courses, for which many employers will grant paid leave. Or you could sit one of the many correspondence courses available from a variety of bodies.

What do I do next?

If you want to go straight from school into freight, write to freight organisations in your chosen area, visit the Member Directory page at www.bifa.org for a list of Freight Forwarding Agents in your area or apply to one of the recruitment agencies specialising in careers within freight. You can obtain a list from BIFA.

If you are interested in entry via further education, you can find out which establishments offer freight-related courses by consulting careers guides in your school careers library. If your school course allows you to take time out for work experience, why not apply to a local freight company? This will be a valuable opportunity to see the industry at work, and help you to decide if it's what you are looking for.

BIFA - Your Guide through the World of Freight

The British International Freight Association (BIFA) is the leading body representing the UK international freight services industry. Its members include airlines, shipping lines, freight forwarders, Express Operators and other organisations involved in the provision of international freight services. It lobbies government and other bodies to ensure regulation takes due account of its members' views and interests, and sets out guidelines for best practice in the industry.

BIFA is committed to the constant improvement of standards in the industry. An important aspect of this is providing support for its members' efforts to recruit high quality candidates, and then retain them through professional training and staff development.

BIFA is a forum to meet other career-minded freight industry workers, exchange information and views, and contribute to the future of the industry as a whole.



BRITISH INTERNATIONAL
FREIGHT ASSOCIATION