Odoo for UAE Logistics and Freight Forwarders: Jobs, Costing and Billing

How to run each shipment as a job, see its real profit and bill customers correctly in Odoo

Question	Short answer
Best fit	Freight forwarders, customs clearance agents, transport companies and small 3PL operators who want jobs, costs and billing in one system
Jobs	Run each shipment as a job file, using a sales order or a project as the job record
Costing	Carrier, port, trucking and agent costs can be posted against the job, so profit per job is visible
Billing	Invoice from the job, with options to re-invoice expenses at cost or at a set sales price (confirm in your version)
Not included	A dedicated freight forwarding app, bills of lading, container tracking and customs declaration filing usually need customisation or other tools

Honest note

Standard Odoo is a business system, not a ready-made freight forwarding product. It handles sales, purchasing, accounting and projects very well, and you shape them around your jobs. Perfonec is an Odoo Ready Partner with Odoo Middle East and develops OESync, so we have a stake here. We will tell you if a specialist freight system suits you better. Some apps depend on the Odoo edition, and Odoo Online does not accept custom modules, while Odoo.sh and on-premise do. Confirm both before you plan.

What to set up in Odoo

1. Job files

- One sales order or project per shipment, with a clear job number your team and customer both use
- Customer, route, cargo type and dates held on the job. Extra shipment fields may need Studio or a small customisation *
- Stages for the job, for example booking, in transit, customs, delivery and closed
- Tasks and documents attached to the job, so nobody searches email for the packing list
- * Setup depends on your Odoo edition and customisation. Confirm with Perfonec.

2. Job costing

- Vendor bills from carriers, shipping lines, port operators, trucking and customs agents
- Analytic distribution so each cost line lands on the right job
- Multi-currency for bills in USD, EUR or other currencies, with AED reporting
- A profit-per-job view: revenue on the job less the costs posted to it
- Open and unbilled costs shown, so a job is not closed while costs are still arriving

3. Billing and collections

- Invoice the customer from the job, with each charge on its own line
- Re-invoicing: Odoo documents re-invoicing of expenses at cost or at sales price. Confirm how your version treats vendor bills
- Credit notes for corrections, kept linked to the original job
- Receivables ageing and follow-up for late-paying customers
- Customer-specific payment terms and credit limits

Which type of logistics business are you?

Business	What matters most in Odoo
Freight forwarder	Job files, multi-currency costs, profit per job, re-invoicing of charges
Customs clearance agent	Many small jobs, reimbursable charges, fast invoicing, clean records
Trucking and transport	Fleet, trips, driver costs and per-trip profit
Warehousing and small 3PL	Stock by customer, storage billing, handling charges
Courier or last-mile	High volume, per-delivery rates, collections

UAE VAT points to check

Situation	What to check
International transport of goods	Often zero-rated, but conditions and evidence apply. Confirm with your tax adviser
Local transport inside the UAE	Generally 5%. Local legs linked to an international move need careful treatment
Port, handling and agent charges	Some may stay taxable even when freight is zero-rated. Check each charge type
Reimbursable expenses	Treatment can differ from your own services. Agree the method with your adviser first
Imports and customs	Keep customs documents that match your records

A made-up example of profit per job

Job 1042 (illustration only). Charged to the customer: AED 6,200. Costs posted to the job: ocean freight AED 3,400, port and handling AED 600, local trucking AED 450, customs agent AED 250, total AED 4,700. Profit on the job: AED 1,500, about 24 percent. VAT is left out of this example, because the treatment depends on the charges and should be confirmed with your tax adviser.

A 7-step setup plan

Step	Action
1	Decide what a job is: one shipment, one booking or one customer order. Keep the rule simple.
2	Set a job numbering rule and the fields your team must record on every job.
3	Create the charge list: freight, port, handling, trucking, customs and your own service fees.
4	Set up analytic accounts so every cost line carries a job number.
5	Decide how charges are re-invoiced, and agree the VAT treatment with your adviser.
6	Import customers, suppliers and open balances, then verify the totals.
7	Run five real jobs end to end, train staff, and then go live.

Common mistakes

Starting without a clear definition of a job. Posting costs without a job number, so profit per job is wrong. Closing jobs while carrier bills are still arriving. Guessing VAT on port and agent charges. Over-customising early, before five real jobs have been tested.

Questions to answer before you start

How do you define a job today? Which charges do you pass on to customers, and which do you absorb? Which currencies do your carriers bill in? Who approves costs, and who closes a job? How do customers expect to receive your invoices? Clear answers here save weeks of rework later.

When Odoo alone is not enough

If you need house and master bills of lading, container and vessel tracking, carrier rate management or customs declaration filing, look at a dedicated freight forwarding system or a customisation project alongside Odoo. Perfonec can scope this honestly and tell you what is best handled in Odoo and what is not.

About Perfonec

Perfonec Computers Trading LLC is an Odoo Ready Partner with Odoo Middle East, an Authorised QuickBooks Dealer and Pro Advisor, a TallyPrime Authorised Silver Partner and a Zoho Partner in Dubai.
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