

DELIVERY & COURIER NETWORKS

The Future of Flexible Work in Delivery & Courier Networks

What owner-operator network leaders told us about running a 1099 operation at scale.

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of delivery and courier networks run their contractor operations across 7+ tools. The highest fragmentation rate of any industry Wingspan surveyed.



THE FUTURE OF FLEXIBLE WORK · 2026

The Future of Flexible Work in Delivery & Courier Networks

What owner-operator network leaders told us about running a 1099 field operation at scale.

Delivery took the top rank of all industries Wingspan surveyed on three measures of contractor pain.

Across 500+ finance, HR, and operations leaders in seven verticals, delivery came in at #1 on tool-stack fragmentation, contractor-support hours, and clarity-of-payment complaints, and last on confidence in managing contractors.

Here's why, and what the leading networks are doing differently.

ABOUT THE DATA

Who is this for Ops, finance, and HR leaders at delivery, courier, and final-mile owner-operator networks running 1099 drivers at scale

Delivery & courier respondents **75**

Total survey sample **500+**

Company size ~43% have 1,000–4,999 employees

OPERATIONAL FRAGMENTATION

41%

run 7+ tools across dispatch, settlement, MVR, and 1099.

#1 of 7 verticals surveyed. +15 pts above the cross-industry baseline.

24%

spend 81+ hours a month on contractor support alone.

#1 of 7 verticals surveyed. Three times the next-closest industry rate.

36%

flag clarity and accuracy of payment as a top complaint.

#1 of 7 verticals surveyed. The settlement-statement transparency signal at scale.

COMPLIANCE POSTURE

75%

flag 2+ misclassification-risk indicators across the lifecycle.

The audit-anxiety bundled signal tracked. 45% flag three or more risk indicators.

17%

report being very confident in managing their contractor base.

Last of 7 verticals surveyed. A 55-point gap behind professional services.

28%

have invested in a purpose-built contractor management system.

Below the cross-industry survey baseline. Despite carrying the #2 spend tier at \$10M+.

WHERE COURIER NETWORKS GET STUCK

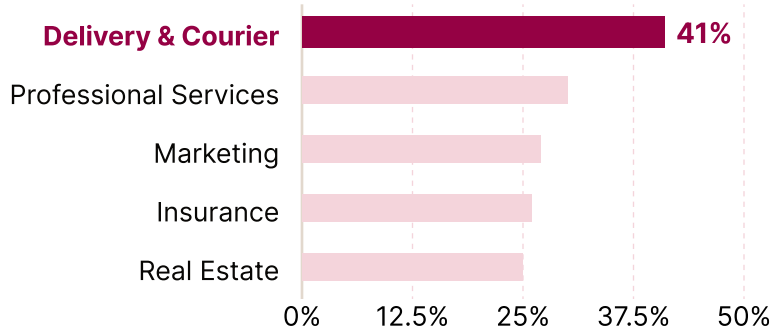
Three chokepoints decide whether a network stays audit-ready.

The pain isn't spread evenly across the contractor lifecycle. Three specific failure points show up sharply in the data, and each one is a compliance signal as much as an operational one.

FAILURE POINT 1 · THE FRAGMENTATION CLIFF

Compliance documentation lives in seven different places at once across the lifecycle.

41% of networks run on 7+ tools across the contractor lifecycle, the highest fragmentation rate in the survey. Only 3% have consolidated to one or two, the lowest rate of any vertical.

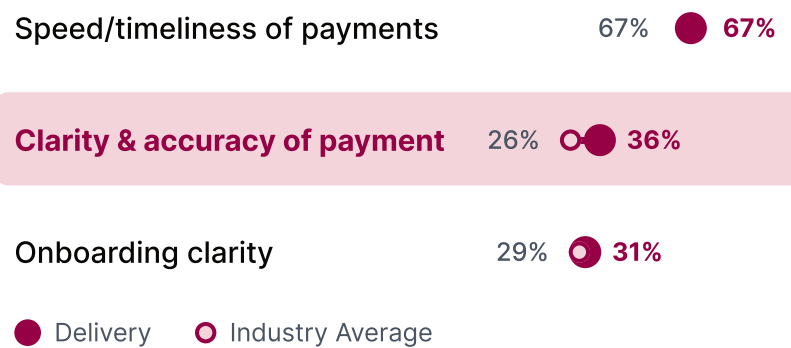


Industry · % of orgs running 7+ tools across the lifecycle

FAILURE POINT 2 · TRANSPARENCY AT SCALE

When support hours cross 81/month, tickets become about transparency.

100% of networks spending 81+ hours on support flag payment timeliness as a top complaint. And a **+10-point clarity gap** sits underneath it. Contractors can't reconcile PDFs against per-stop and per-mile lines.

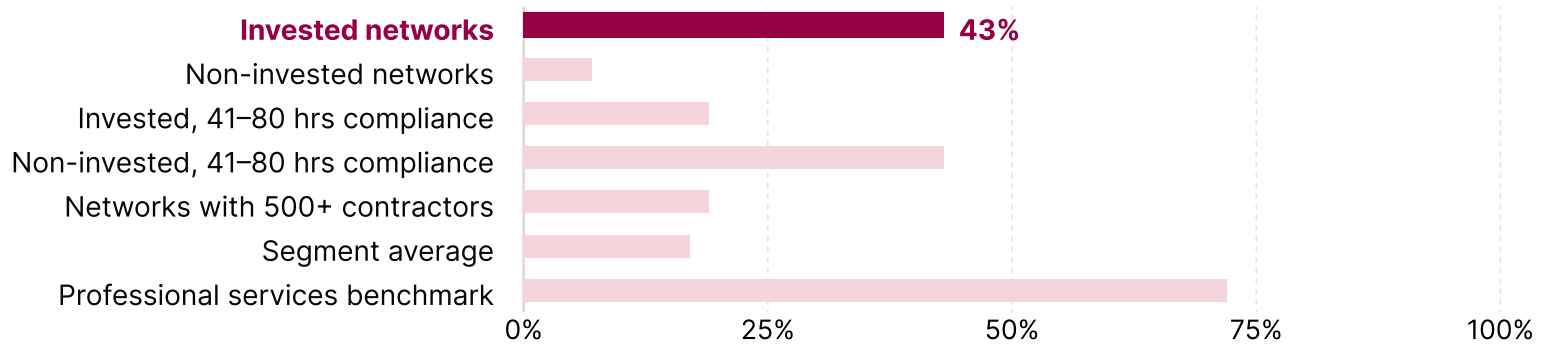


Top contractor complaints · % flagging, Delivery vs industry average

FAILURE POINT 3 · THE INVESTMENT-CONFIDENCE INVERSION

Networks that have invested don't look like networks that haven't.

Invested delivery networks are 5.8x more likely to be very confident managing contractors. Yet only 28% of the segment has invested, and among networks running 500+ contractors that share falls to 19%.



Segment · % very confident managing contractors

75%

of delivery networks flag 2+ risk indicators

Audit risk is built into the operating model. 75% of delivery networks flag at least 2 of 5 misclassification-anxiety signals across compliance, background checks, license verification, insurance verification, and compliance hours. 45% flag three or more.

WHERE DELIVERY RANKS

Delivery leads in pain and trails every vertical on confidence.

Across the 500+ leaders Wingspan surveyed in seven verticals, delivery took the top rank on three operational measures and the bottom rank on confidence. **Every #1 is a consolidation argument. The "last" is a compliance-by-design one.** Each rank is a separate failure mode with its own structural cause.

	Delivery	Real Estate	Healthcare	Insurance	Customer Support	Mktg	Pro Svcs
Running 7+ tools across the contractor lifecycle	41%	25%	18%	26%	23%	27%	30%
Spending 81+ hours a month on contractor support	24%	18%	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%
Clarity & accuracy of payment as top complaint	36%	26%	22%	17%	35%	26%	23%
Very confident managing contractors (LAST)	17%	28%	23%	37%	18%	34%	72%
Have invested in a 1099 management system	28%	20%	27%	15%	52%	34%	51%

The takeaway: delivery's contractor model breaks at the *intersections* between issues. A fragmented stack buries classification documentation, settlement statements contractors can't reconcile, and a buyer who hasn't yet invested in the controls. The networks with 5.8x higher confidence already collapsed all three into one system of record.

WHAT THE LEADING NETWORKS ARE DOING

Three moves the leading delivery networks have already made.

- 01 Consolidate the seven-tool stack into one auditable platform.**
 41% of delivery networks are stuck here. One record per owner-operator defends the 1099 relationship.
- 02 Make settlement statements legible by default.**
 36% of contractors cite payment clarity as a top complaint. Itemization keeps them.
- 03 Treat classification as a build-time decision.**
 75% of delivery networks flag 2+ risk indicators. Continuous credentialing closes the audit-readiness gap fast.

These are the moves Wingspan customers like **DeliverThat** (a final-mile owner-operator network running drivers across multiple metros) and **RoadRunner Services** (an auto-transport network on the legitimate lease-back model) have already made.

[Read the case](#)

Wingspan is the payroll platform built for owner-operator 1099 networks.

Per-stop settlement, continuous credentialing, and 1099 filing in one platform, used by DeliverThat, RoadRunner Services, and other legitimate owner-operator networks scaling past 500 contractors.

[Book a demo](#)
[See how it works](#)

The 2026 Future of Flexible Work Report surveyed 500+ US-based finance, HR, and operations leaders. Delivery & courier cut: Transport & Logistics, n=75 (~15% of sample). Cross-industry comparisons computed against the full sample. Customer metrics from published Wingspan case studies on wingspan.app/customers.