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# Before You Move

A Producing Loan Officer’s Guide to Evaluating a New Lender

Producing loan officers

RecruiterNate.com

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The people, companies and figures in the case are fictional. Use the examples to examine your own decisions.

CHAPTER 01

# The call you almost didn’t take

Jordan was on the way out when the phone rang. A purchase was supposed to close Friday, and the agent wanted to know whether to tell the sellers to book the moving truck. Jordan had already left two messages for an update. The third would have to wait.

The caller was a recruiter. They had talked once before. This time she said, “If we could pay you another fifteen basis points and put you on a stronger platform, would it be worth a conversation?”

Jordan looked back at the screen. Still no update on Friday’s closing.

“Probably,” Jordan said.

**Replay the decision a week later.** Jordan listed three different moments from the past month. One was the Friday closing. Another was a late reply on a product question. The third was a transaction where the same operations team had flagged a problem before Jordan even knew about it. Jordan labeled them separately. The first two suggested areas to

# The call you almost didn’t take

investigate. The third was evidence that the existing team did some things worth preserving. A recruiting call taken at the worst moment of the week can hide that part of the picture.

That answer made sense. Last year Jordan funded $12 million. Fifteen basis points on that volume came to $18,000 in additional gross compensation under the offer as described. And at that moment, the idea of somebody else answering a phone sounded pretty good.

By Monday the loan had closed. The agent sent a thank-you text. The processor who had stayed late called to make sure Jordan knew the final condition was cleared. It was the same team Jordan had wanted to get away from on Thursday.

Both days told Jordan something about the business. Thursday showed how much work it took to get a reliable answer under pressure. Monday showed what a good teammate was willing to do when a client needed help. Jordan needed to understand whether the first problem was getting worse and whether the second strength would be hard to replace.

# The call you almost didn’t take

**Take this into your next conversation.** Write down the thing that made you pick up the phone. Now write down the last three times it happened, who felt the impact, and what it cost in time, business, or trust. If you can only remember one bad week, give yourself time to learn more. If the same problem shows up month after month, you have something specific to investigate.

**Write your opening note.** Finish these three sentences before taking a second call. “I started looking when…” “I would want a move to improve…” “The thing I would miss about my current team is…” Then ask someone familiar with your work to challenge one claim. They may remember when the problem began or when it didn’t happen. If you don’t have the examples yet, start with a two-week log. Include the delay, who helped, and whether it changed an outcome.

**Compare two weeks.** Mark one week when the support problem showed up and another when it did not. Were the files different? Was somebody covering a leave? A recurring issue may have a clear trigger. Bring the pattern to the next conversation so the manager or recruiter can address the situation you actually need to improve.

CHAPTER 02

# Write your own job description

Jordan started with three words: pay, support, growth. A recruiter could agree to all three without making a single promise that Jordan could verify.

So Jordan pulled out a calendar and reconstructed the previous week. There were four calls for updates that should have had a clear owner, two files that needed a second look at product fit, and one meeting with an agent that Jordan had canceled to chase conditions. The canceled meeting bothered Jordan most. The weekly scramble was starting to take time from the work that brought in next month's business.

Jordan rewrote the list:

• **Must have:** A named escalation owner who can respond when a purchase deadline is at risk.

• **Must protect:** The products and service commitments that account for most of my repeat referrals.

# Write your own job description

• **Want to improve:** More time with referral partners and a compensation plan I can explain from a real pay example.

• **Can trade:** Some technology preferences if I can still do my work without adding steps to every file.

**Take the manager's answer seriously.** Jordan's manager said the escalation trial would work on purchases, but the backup was limited to certain hours. That gave Jordan an honest boundary to test. They chose to review whether ownership appeared before the agent needed to call again, and whether Jordan could get a confirmed update time. Two people could now observe the same result. They had moved beyond deciding which person was "better at communication."

Then Jordan asked the current manager for a specific change.

"I had four files last month where I couldn't give the agent a reliable update without calling several people. Can we agree on who owns those escalations and what I should do if that person is out? I'd like to try it for thirty days and review what

# Write your own job description

happens.”

The manager agreed to a trial. That made the current lender a real option in the comparison. Jordan could now compare two operating arrangements instead of comparing an old frustration to a new promise.

This is good sales discovery applied to your own business. Start with the problem, ask what it costs, and agree on what a better result looks like. A recruiter who asks you to define that result is giving you something useful. You can use the same method with an agent who says they need “better communication.” Ask which call they’re tired of making and what update they wish they had received.

**Set a requirement before you see a pitch.** If support matters most, write a minimum you can recognize. “When a deadline is at risk, one named person owns the request and I can tell the agent when I’ll follow up.” Put your desired improvements below that line and preferences after them. When two offers compete, assess the requirements first. Then decide whether a preferred feature matters enough to offset the trade-off it creates. You can use the same sheet to discuss changes with your current manager.

CHAPTER 03

# Make the numbers earn their place

The new lender sent Jordan a compensation summary. For this fictional comparison, assume a flat 100 basis points at the current lender and 115 at the prospective lender, applied to eligible funded volume. One basis point is one hundredth of a percentage point. The case assumes all the volume shown qualifies and leaves out bonuses, costs, and taxes.

| Scenario | Annual eligible funded volume | Rate | Illustrative gross compensation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Stay and repeat last year | $12,000,000 | 100 bps | $120,000 |
| Move and repeat last year | $12,000,000 | 115 bps | $138,000 |
| Move with a slower first year | $10,400,000 | 115 bps | $119,600 |

The offer broke even at about **$10.43 million** of eligible funded volume, before other differences. Jordan could lose about $1.57 million in volume and still roughly match last year’s gross compensation under those assumptions.

# Make the numbers earn their place

**Try an apples-to-apples adjustment.** If the prospective lender's eligible volume is $11 million, the gross at 115 basis points is $126,500. Suppose the new setup also adds $4,000 of recurring business expenses and the first year includes another $3,000 of transition expenses. After those illustrative added costs, the comparison comes to $119,500 against $120,000 of current gross, with other costs and benefits held equal. Jordan kept separate rows for the payout and expenses so a colleague could tell which assumption moved the result.

Jordan circled one word in the summary: **eligible**. "Can you show me an anonymized pay example and the written plan that explains which funded loans qualify? I want to see how a normal month and a slow month would actually pay."

Next came pricing. Jordan picked three fictional files modeled on the business that actually came in: a straightforward conventional purchase, a first-time buyer with limited cash, and a file whose product choice had mattered to a referral partner. Jordan asked both lenders to explain the scenarios using comparable assumptions and the same point in time. The point was to see where differences

# Make the numbers earn their place

appeared and what the loan officer would have to do about them.

That exercise changed the question from “Who has better pricing?” to “Where would I win or lose business with the people who already call me?”

**Try the math on your own book.** Start with eligible funded volume and the written payout terms. Run a repeat-year case, a slower first-year case, and a case where your most important referral source sends less business. List costs or benefits separately so you can see which ones are recurring and which belong to the transition. Put a question mark beside anything you’re assuming.

**Ask for the boundary of the offer.** “Can we use an anonymized month and mark each loan as eligible or excluded? Then can we apply the same rules to a fictional month with a different product mix?” Write down any term that changes the comparison. If your current compensation includes benefits or expenses that the new offer treats differently, list them in their own rows. Run the comparison before and after the transition period. A one-time gap has different implications from a shortfall that returns every year.

CHAPTER 04

# Ask for the last time it happened

The recruiter said the new lender had “white-glove operations.” Jordan could have asked what that meant. A better question came from the Friday closing.

**Jordan:** “Can you walk me through a purchase that was at risk of missing its closing date? I’m looking for the steps, so please leave out any borrower details.”

>

**Recruiter:** “Our operations group jumps in pretty quickly. You can always call your branch manager.”

>

**Jordan:** “Let’s say it’s Thursday afternoon, closing is Friday, and the manager is in meetings. Who takes ownership of the file? Who tells me when I can update the agent?”

>

**Recruiter:** “I’d like you to ask our operations lead that. She can show you how their handoff works.”

# Ask for the last time it happened

Jordan took that as a reason to schedule the conversation. The recruiter knew who could answer and was willing to make the introduction. The operation still had to show how it worked.

**Test the exception with a second person.** Jordan asked a producer at the prospective lender what happened the last time the normal owner was unavailable. The producer named the backup and described a slower response during a busy week. Jordan compared it with the operations lead's account. They agreed on who owned the work, and the timing was less predictable during a surge. That gave Jordan a targeted follow-up. "What update can I reliably promise the agent when the team is at capacity?"

On the next call, the operations lead gave a recent example. She explained the escalation channel and who covered it. When Jordan asked what happened during a surge, she said the team had sometimes moved a file to a different processor and that the handoff could cost time. That admission helped Jordan ask a better question: "How do I know when my file has changed hands?"

# Ask for the last time it happened

Jordan wrote down the promised process, the example that supported it, and the detail still missing. The same note format worked when asking about scenario support, technology, marketing turnaround, and onboarding.

Here’s a sales technique worth keeping. **Ask for a recent example, then ask for the exception.** “When did this last happen?” gets you closer to a real process. “What happens when the usual person is out?” shows how the team handles a day that goes sideways. If a prospect tells you everything is fine where they are, the same technique helps you understand their business without forcing a problem into the conversation.

**Make a small evidence record.** Record the claim, the evidence, and the limit. For example, the claim is that urgent purchases receive a named owner. The evidence is a walkthrough and a recent anonymized example. The limit is that overnight coverage still needs confirmation. Then name the person who can resolve it. Use the same format for any pitch about leads, marketing, product availability, or training. The notes make your next question clearer and help you remember what you actually heard.

CHAPTER 05

# Look at the business behind the production number

Two referral partners accounted for about half of Jordan’s funded volume. One cared most about updates on tight purchase timelines. The other sent buyers who often needed the kind of product guidance Jordan had been getting from an experienced colleague.

Jordan drew two columns on a sheet of paper. In the first went the reason each partner kept calling. In the second went the people, programs, and habits that made that reason true. One relationship depended on Jordan’s responsiveness. The other depended just as much on a team member who knew how to sort through tricky scenarios.

The new lender showed Jordan a convincing purchase escalation process. The product conversation was less clear. An onboarding lead said there was a specialist available, but nobody had explained when Jordan could reach that person or how coverage worked when they were away.

# Look at the business behind the production number

**Follow the money to its source.** Half of Jordan's $12 million came from two partners. If that combined business fell by one quarter and all other business stayed level, Jordan would lose $1.5 million of annual volume and land near $10.5 million. At 115 basis points, that leaves $120,750 of illustrative gross before differences in expenses. The comparison is already close. Jordan used the scenario to ask what each partner would need to see before feeling comfortable with the new process.

Jordan started to see why the $18,000 had felt so certain. The math was simple. The assumptions behind it took work.

**Map the relationships you rely on.** Pick your three most important sources of repeat business. For each, write the promise they expect you to keep, the evidence that you can keep it at the new lender, and the part you still need to verify. Include one relationship you think could grow under a better setup. A move can create upside when you know which specific capability will help you earn it.

# Look at the business behind the production number

Use fictional or anonymized examples in evaluation calls. Keep borrower information, internal records, and active file details in the appropriate systems. Discuss any transition communications and file handoffs with the appropriate people before acting.

**Map a handoff you can rehearse.** Pick one referral relationship. Write what usually happens from the introduction to the first update. Identify the task you own and the one that relies on someone else. Run a fictional example with the prospective team and ask whether the same promise is practical. If you have an unresolved gap, write down how you will handle it in the model. Keep a partner's decision open until you have actual evidence about what they need.

**Look for a source you could grow.** Jordan remembered a partner who sent occasional business but needed more dependable scenario support before sending a larger share. Jordan asked what a good first exchange would look like. The answer was a short planning call with a named backup. That gave the prospective team something specific to demonstrate.

CHAPTER 06

# The second call is where you learn the most

By now the recruiter had heard Jordan say “I need to think about it” twice. She could have pushed for a decision. Instead, she tried to summarize.

“Here’s what I heard. The compensation could work. You liked what operations showed you. The open question is whether you can get the same product support for a big part of your referral business. Did I get that right?”

Jordan said yes, then added something that hadn’t come up. “I’m also trying to picture who I call in the first two weeks. I don’t want to spend that time figuring out which promise belongs to which person.”

The recruiter offered a short call with the onboarding owner and the product specialist. Jordan agreed to bring two hypothetical scenarios. They put twenty minutes on the calendar and agreed what the call needed to answer.

**Watch how the recruiter handles a hard answer.** The onboarding lead said the specialist covered the products

# The second call is where you learn the most

Jordan needed on weekdays, but vacation coverage worked differently. The recruiter could have glossed over it. Instead she asked what timeframe Jordan would need a backup for. Jordan mentioned the first two weeks, when unfamiliar requests were most likely. They agreed to ask the manager to confirm coverage for that period. The conversation moved because somebody named a specific gap.

This is a close you can use in sales without putting the other person on the defensive. Say what you heard. Let them correct you. Propose the smallest useful next step, with a person, a date, and a question to resolve. A prospect can say yes to learning something without agreeing to change jobs. If they decline, respect that answer and keep the relationship on good terms.

A producing loan officer can do the same thing when meeting a new referral partner:

“You mentioned that the hardest part is finding out late that a buyer needs a different plan. If I walk you through how I’d

# The second call is where you learn the most

flag that early on a sample scenario, would that help you decide whether it’s worth a longer conversation?”

The technique works because the next step addresses the concern the other person actually named.

**Take the technique into a referral meeting.** Suppose an agent says that a prior lender gave quick updates but the information kept changing. Summarize it back and ask where the uncertainty made their job harder. Then offer a sample update that distinguishes confirmed information from an expected next answer. Ask whether that would help them decide when to call the buyer. You have earned a useful next exchange by addressing the operating problem they described, in language they can use.

**Make the next meeting easy to evaluate.** Send one line before the call that says what you hope to learn. Afterward, write whether you got an answer, who confirmed it and what remains open. If the call produces another broad pitch, ask for the specific example again. Then decide whether another conversation would add information. This keeps a series of pleasant calls from becoming a substitute for evidence.

CHAPTER 07

# Make a decision you can explain in a sentence

Jordan eventually got a strong answer from the specialist about the product examples. The remaining issue was coverage during the first month. The prospective lender could name the onboarding lead, but the backup person still hadn’t been identified. At the current lender, the thirty-day trial had already produced cleaner escalation on two files.

Jordan decided to stay for now and set a review date. The message to the recruiter was simple:

**Write the conditions for the other outcome.** If the thirty-day trial at Jordan’s current lender fails, the option to stay becomes weaker. If the prospective manager confirms coverage and demonstrates the product support Jordan needs, the option to move becomes stronger. The compensation scenario still needs a believable volume assumption. Jordan wrote those conditions before talking to the recruiter again. That gave the next conversation a purpose, even if the conclusion changed.

“You’ve given me a better view of the offer. I’m going to give the new process here thirty more days. If I still can’t get the coverage I need on purchases, I’d like to revisit it. If we do,

# Make a decision you can explain in a sentence

I’d want to confirm who backs up the specialist during onboarding.”

You might land somewhere different with the same offer. If your current team hasn’t corrected a pattern that’s costing you business, and the new lender can show how it would handle your files, the case for moving gets stronger. The important part is being able to say what you’re betting on and what would change your mind.

A week later the recruiter sent Jordan a simple question to use in the next operations review. No deadline. No pitch. Jordan kept the message. Months later, when an agent asked Jordan if they knew someone who could help a branch leader think through a hire, the recruiter’s name came to mind.

**Try three closes aloud.** For a move, say which requirement is met and what still needs an onboarding owner. For a stay, say which change you will review at the current lender and when. For a deferral, say which evidence could change the decision and who will get it. If any close turns into a long list of impressions, return to the requirements you wrote earlier. A short explanation is easier to verify when the next person asks why you made the choice.

CHAPTER 08

# Your decision sheet

Fill this out after your conversations. Start by naming the two requirements that would make you pause if either lender couldn’t meet them. Then use the rows below to compare evidence.

| What matters | Current lender evidence | Prospective lender evidence | Who can verify the gap, and by when? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eligible volume and actual payout | | | |
| Pricing and product fit for my file mix | | | |
| Purchase deadlines and escalation coverage | | | |
| Referral commitments I need to protect | | | |
| Onboarding ownership and backup coverage | | | |
| Time to develop new business | | | |

# Your decision sheet

Mark each item **verified**, **partly verified**, or **open**. A friendly conversation can tell you who to ask. A written plan, a relevant demonstration, or a specific operating example can tell you more about what to expect. Keep those kinds of evidence separate.

**Score a worked row.** Jordan marked purchase escalation partly verified at the current lender because the new process had worked twice but the trial was ongoing. Jordan marked it verified for the prospective lender’s ordinary coverage and added a separate open row for the onboarding backup. This distinction kept the comparison honest. One good demonstration should not automatically fill every adjacent box. A partially verified item can still support a decision if you can afford the uncertainty.

Finish these four lines:

• The problem I’m trying to solve is _____.

• The thing I can least afford to lose is _____.

• The evidence that could change my mind is _____.

# Your decision sheet

• My decision today is **stay, move, or defer**, because _____.

If you're still deciding, name the owner and date for the next check. If you're moving, turn your unresolved operational questions into the agenda for your first onboarding call. If you're staying, put a review date on the calendar and see whether the problem that started the search is actually improving.

**Apply one threshold.** Choose the gap that could most affect your business and decide what would make you comfortable closing it. If your key partner expects a dependable answer during an urgent purchase, name the process and backup you need to observe. If your break-even depends on a level of production you haven't reached before, write the plan that would make the assumption credible. Set a follow-up date and treat the new evidence as a reason to revise the sheet.

**Put the decision on a calendar.** Jordan set a reminder for the day the support trial ended and saved one example to revisit. Do the same with your most important open item. At the review, record what happened, whether it changed your decision, and what you'll tell the people expecting an answer.

PUT IT TO WORK

# Your action sheet

### My reason for considering a move

### The two requirements I need to protect

### My break-even volume and assumptions

### The evidence I need and who can verify it

### My decision and review date

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