



10 Questions to Ask When **Choosing a Mortgage Platform**



With Complexity Comes Opportunity

Mortgage lenders of all sizes across the UK and Ireland are facing significant headwinds from many directions. But times of great disruption and complexity can unearth new opportunities for challengers to take the lead.

COMPLEXITY...

Increased competition, economic uncertainty and cost pressures are squeezing market share and profit margins. Meanwhile, the ongoing expansion of digital experiences across all industries is fuelling customer demand for seamless transactions at any time on any channel. Loyalty is also at risk, with 84% of mortgage business conducted through intermediaries in 2022¹, and 50% of borrowers remortgaging to a different lender, driven largely by rates.⁴

On top of this, mortgage lenders are also dealing with challenges created by organisational silos, complex legacy IT architecture, cyber security threats, skills shortages and the tension between business and tech-led agendas. All at a time when institutions need to innovate faster than ever just to keep up.

Understandably, this complexity and uncertainty can stifle progress. That's why, despite significant effort and investment, 70% of financial institutions that choose to build their own platforms report that they are falling short of their digital transformation goals.²

OPPORTUNITY...

For financial institutions willing to embrace innovative technology and strong partnerships, there has never been a time of greater opportunity.

Once solely the domain of the biggest players with the deepest pockets, the rise of software-as-a-service (SaaS) platforms has put enterprise-level technology within reach of all financial institutions regardless of their size, budget or in-house capabilities.

Even the most sophisticated digital platforms and technologies cannot guarantee success in isolation. For financial institutions, fostering a culture that champions partnership and collaboration is paramount. When cultivated effectively, such partnerships can bring invaluable experience and expertise in maximising the value of these platforms.

Speed and agility have become competitive superpowers.

WHAT'S YOUR NEXT MOVE?

Once you decide to adopt the latest digital tools to modernise your mortgage platform, the critical question is: Which mortgage platform and approach do you choose?

In this guide, we arm you with 10 strategic questions to ask vendors that will help fast-track your mortgage transformation, avoid common pitfalls and ensure you invest in a platform and partnership that aligns with your needs today, and into the future.

"With the right approach to identifying and productionising new growth opportunities underpinned by the flexibility and speed new platforms offer, banks will be able to unlock a world of new opportunities" ³

Question 1: **What is your core competency? Banking or technology?**

There is no shortage of choices when it comes to software providers, each bringing something different to the table. That's why mapping their core strengths against your needs and in-house capabilities is a sure way to fast-track your shortlist.

A digital loan origination platform requires a combination of deep financial services expertise and proven technical know-how. The right partner for you will be one that complements your needs and in-house skillset in both areas.

VALIDATE THE VENDOR'S FINANCE DOMAIN EXPERTISE

Research their leadership team. Have product specialists ask in-depth questions. Confirm finance industry experts will be hands-on during the entire project. Ask for case studies in organisations like yours, as well as customer references.

LOOK FOR PROVEN EXAMPLES OF TECHNICAL DEPLOYMENTS

It's important to have your technical people get under the hood of their platform architecture. Ask for demos of key functionality. Confirm whether it is cloud native, on premise or hybrid. Review technical specifications, in-built features and security processes. Proven providers will have all this on hand.



Takeaway: **Beware of generalists. Require proof of banking knowledge and technology credentials.**

Some vendors are software specialists at heart with general financial experience, some are more specialist banking consultants, while others offer a mix. Identify the core expertise of your prospective partner and how it complements yours.

Question 2: **Where do you stand on the build or buy decision?**

A fundamental issue to settle before digitally rebooting your loan platform is whether you will build your own platform from scratch or customise an established platform. This will significantly impact your choice of partner and approach to transformation.

The rise of SaaS platforms has tipped the scale towards leveraging existing platforms for core processes from enterprise resource planning (ERP) and customer relationship management (CRM) to logistics and financials – as well as more specialised use cases like mortgage. However, investing in building bespoke platforms is still a consideration for banking and financial institutions.

Creating custom software gives you total control and allows for a fully personalised solution. However, it usually involves substantial initial capital expenditure and requires specialised internal skills to manage its complexities. On the other hand, purchasing pre-existing software provides ready-to-use features, proven performance, quicker set-up time, less maintenance, ongoing innovation, and reduced operating expenses.

CONSIDER BUYING IF YOU:

- Have core use cases that can be delivered by customising an existing platform
- Need to transform at speed but have limited budgets, in-house skills and resources
- Prefer to focus your resources on serving your customers rather than building software
- Want a proven, tested product that can scale and adapt as needs evolve

CONSIDER BUILDING IF YOU HAVE:

- Highly bespoke or unique needs that can't be met by off-the-shelf solutions
- In-house resources to commit to long-term development, continuous improvement and maintenance
- A requirement for complete control over every feature
- Capacity to manage risks of scope and budget creep, technical challenges and quality assurance

Takeaway: **Play to your strengths. Choose an approach that complements your vision.**

The build or buy decision comes down to evaluating your specific objectives, needs, budget, in-house skills and resources, timeline and long-term strategy of your business.

Question 3: **How will you help us deliver sustainable change?**

According to McKinsey² 70% of build transformation projects do not reach their stated objectives due to a combination of factors including a lack of in-house skills, budget blow-outs and stakeholders underestimating complexity.

To avoid these pitfalls, choose a platform and implementation partner that complements your in-house skills and helps fill the gaps will help you beat the odds. Here are some factors to look for in a platform and partner:

CORE FUNCTIONALITY OUT-OF-THE BOX

Select a configurable loan origination platform with in-built workflows that cover everything from basic loans, remortgaging and serviceability through to complex use cases like loan structure changes, underwriting, lenders requesting additional information, credit policy changes and all combinations in between.

A general workflow tool will not cover all bases. By eliminating the heavy lifting of designing, testing and integrating processes from scratch, your team can focus on fine-tuning and polishing the customer experience - adding the human touch on top of a best practice technology platform.

SIMPLIFY AND STREAMLINE PROCESSES BEFORE MIGRATING

Simply lifting and shifting existing inefficient processes to a new platform is one of the primary reasons that transformation projects fail. Engaging a partner with deep vertical banking knowledge will enable you to streamline underlying workflows and data capture to gain efficiencies and drive measurable change.

LOOK FOR AN ONGOING TRANSFER OF SKILLS

The perfect partnership is one that enables your team to grow their skills, so they become experts in configuring the platform and driving innovation independently - and through this process they are likely to become internal champions of change.

Takeaway: **Beyond technology, look for a partner that builds your people, processes and skill sets.**

Ideally, your platform provider will bring, and share, valuable knowledge, experiences and insight gained from similar organisations and projects to fast-track your path to value.

Question 4: **How do you deliver a meaningful customer experience for borrowers?**



The decision to purchase a home, renovate or invest in property is a significant life decision. The outcome is not only financially crucial, but stressful and emotionally charged. Borrowers see little differentiation in mortgage products and will switch for a better rate.

Today's customers expect a simple, fast and easy self-service loan or remortgage experience on any channel, yet they also need the reassurance of personal support when things get complex.

The mortgage process can be seen as linear: enquiry, decision-in-principle, application, verification, decision, valuation, offer, conveyancing and completion. Your loan origination process should allow a borrower or broker to self-complete an application process within 10 minutes. In reality, the process can get messy, and these are the moments that offer the greatest opportunity for differentiation.

For example: The lender requests extra information. The loan structure changes. Validation of credit policy conditions fails. A broker wants to explore servicing scenarios. A customer gets confused or has questions. It is at these points that your platform is put to the test.

Ask your provider how they incorporate clear instructions, real-time updates, contextually relevant alerts, live support and human intervention to ease anxiety and build confidence for customers.

Takeaway: **Customer experience needs to be at the heart of your transformation.**

To meet expectations and deliver a frictionless customer experience, it is crucial that your choice of platform enables hybrid experiences across multiple channels including online, over the phone and in person. The human touch makes all the difference.

Brand loyalty is under threat. 50% of borrowers will look to remortgage with a different lender for a better rate.⁴ If they switch lenders, you risk losing their entire banking portfolio.

Question 5: **How do you deliver a rewarding experience for brokers?**

While optimising customer experience (CX) for direct borrowers is crucial, it's only part of the picture. Recent research by IMLA found that 84% of mortgage business was conducted through mortgage intermediaries, predicting that this share of distribution could rise as high as 90%, demonstrating that broker experience (BX) is equally important.

As powerful gatekeepers, brokers have influence over customers to shift them away from clunky, slow and inconsistent approval processes to ones that make their job easier. Today more than 50% of broker-originated loans go to a lender that the borrower hadn't previously considered.

Just one unhappy broker can result in the loss of hundreds of loans. Conversely, one delighted broker can deliver high volume book growth and build your reputation as a scalable channel. Brokers will take the path of least resistance to build their revenue and satisfy their customers.

Look for features tailored specifically for the needs of a broker, such as:

- A backbone of standardised workflows that allow brokers to drop in and out at different points and bring in their customers as needed
- Brokers are very protective of their client relationships - functionality needs to give brokers control over customer touchpoints until final approval and funding
- Empower brokers with the answers and alerts they need to look good in front of their customers at each step of the process.



Takeaway: Nurture your channel. Build net new book growth by helping brokers build theirs.

The ideal platform will deliver one central workflow, with reports, alerts and functions personally tailored to reflect the needs of your brokers, their customers and your support staff.

With 84% of loans coming via brokers¹, delivering a personalised BX has moved from a nice-to-have to a commercial imperative.

Question 6: **What measurable benefits can we expect? And when?**

As you research vendors, you may come across similar broad messaging around streamlining processes, unlocking cost efficiencies and fast-tracking implementation. As part of the decision-making process, be sure to drill deeper into the specific outcomes you can expect and in what time frame.

Look for local examples of projects like yours with evidence in the form of case studies, customer feedback or broker testimonials. Request in-depth demos around relevant use cases.



BENEFITS:

SOME OF THE OUTCOMES YOU WOULD EXPECT TO SEE EXAMPLES OF ARE:

- Transparent reports and real-time alerts around loan status for customers and brokers
- Accelerated approval processes so customers and brokers get faster decisions
- More efficient processes, lower costs, better margins and profitable growth
- Stronger customer and broker Net Promoter Scores (NPS)
- Net book growth through improved customer and broker retention and acquisition
- The all-important lower cost-per-application (CPA)

TIMEFRAMES:

EXPECT TO SEE BENEFITS WITHIN SIX MONTHS

If you have commitment from your leadership and operational team, an experienced partner should be able to guide you through the migration and deployment of a best practice digital loan origination process within six months.

Rather than taking loans and remortgaging across broker and direct channels all at once, you can start by focusing on one or two specific use cases. This approach could bring benefits within as little as six weeks and provide a platform to build on and optimise based on feedback and analysis.

Takeaway: Target progress over perfection. Stack up quick wins that build towards sustainable results.

A successful transformation is an iterative process rather than done and dusted at a point in time.

Question 7: **How does your platform connect with the broader financial ecosystem?**

Mortgage loans are one piece in the personal finance puzzle. To deliver a holistic customer experience, look for a loan origination platform that is open, flexible and able to adapt to evolving channels, products and market conditions by integrating with third party software, data sources and providers.

- **Integration:** Does the platform support application programming interfaces (APIs) that allow third party technologies and partners to integrate directly when needed?
- **Compliance:** Does the platform have in-built regional compliance and how does it manage changes when new rules and regulations are released?
- **Open banking:** Does the platform support secure interoperability across third party banking services and providers in line with the latest requirements?
- **New technology:** How regularly is it updated and what is the rollout and testing method for new features? Are they added automatically, or do they need manual intervention or added cost?
- **Local and global networks:** Can your partner bring value-adds such as global banking knowledge, local experts, community networking, online training and events?



Takeaway: **Loans don't happen on an island. Tap into a connected ecosystem.**

Having a core backbone with the option to leverage the broader ecosystem is the most effective way to offer the range of capabilities needed to create an outstanding mortgage experience.

Question 8: **What is your process for onboarding, implementation and ongoing partnership?**

From preparation and deployment to support and optimisation, it's important to find a partner that supports you during all key stages of your journey towards best practice loan origination.

Ask your potential provider for details about their end-to-end offering, approach and processes and look for elements including:

PREPARATION:

- Functionality deep dives and demonstrations
- Open, transparent communication
- Strategic advice - helping you understand the value
- Collaborative approach

ONBOARDING:

- Process for migrating to the new platform and decommissioning existing
- Managing disruption for staff, customers and brokers
- Defining single source of truth for data

ONGOING PARTNERSHIP:

- Feedback loops to allow for continuous improvement
- Ecosystem networking and events
- Educational resources - community forum, training, online learning
- Local experts on hand across strategy, engineering, product, service and support

POST IMPLEMENTATION:

- Dedicated customer success manager
- Ongoing business support model
- Proactive technical support

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT:

- Rolling program of feature upgrades
- Committed research and development budget
- Security testing and updates
- Plan for emerging artificial intelligence capabilities

Takeaway: Before taking the first step, get a bird's eye view of the big picture.

Based on past success, your partner should have a proven set of processes from the first project through to how it will evolve over the months and years ahead.



Question 9: How do you ensure platform stability and data security?

With increasingly sophisticated cyber security attacks penetrating some of the most established organisations, it's important that the platform you choose has best-in-class risk and data security controls.

To protect your customers, brokers, staff and brand reputation, look for platform providers with strong security credentials and processes including:

- Information Security Management certified against any internationally recognised standards such as ISO 27001, PCI, SOC, ISAE and PII
- Access controls in place to ensure information is only available to those users who are authorised and require access
- A platform built on a trusted and established architecture with proven stability and security used by leading financial institutions in the region and globally
- Data housed within the platform with assurance that it is protected and adheres to the strictest privacy standards and governance
- Regular penetration and vulnerability tests conducted by a reputable security partner
- Platform monitored continually for incidents with strict response processes for shutting it down and protecting data and operations in case of an incident



Takeaway: Inadequate security assurance is a deal breaker. Ongoing protection is a must.

When you're handling sensitive financial details and personally identifiable information (PII), There is no room for compromise.

Question 10: **What is the investment and innovation roadmap for your platform?**

The fintech space has been running hot for several years now as new digital players and platforms hit the market, but the recent explosion in artificial intelligence, machine learning and predictive analytics has put a rocket under innovation. These innovations should already be at the heart of your loan origination platform development.

Ask your partner to take you through their year-on-year plan to invest in product development and innovation to keep your platform ahead of changing customer and market conditions, regulation change, open banking, security threats and broader technology trends.

Look for a pipeline of new features in the short and medium term, or even explore appetite for partnership with potential vendors on feature development, as well as a clearly articulated vision for future opportunities backed by dedicated onshore development teams and committed R&D budgets.

Takeaway: If you're standing still, you're going backwards.

While a particular platform or software may meet your needs today, it will quickly fall behind without a commitment to significant continual research and development (R&D).



Mortgage Platform Checklist: **10 questions to ask your potential partner**

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Why partner with nCino?

For more than a decade, nCino has been the partner of choice for progressive community and challenger banks across 14 countries, helping them to move fast, innovate and outperform.

Our advanced cloud-native platform streamlines and simplifies processes, reduces costs and puts CX at the heart of everything. Our fully configurable out-of-the-box mortgage solution is built on this same platform, and spans the entire origination lifecycle, from enquiry and credit decisioning through to completion, with a solution tailored specifically to the needs of the UK and Irish mortgage markets.

Partnering with nCino means not only sustainable digital transformation, but also access to in-depth and diverse global banking knowledge, an onshore team of more than 60 strategic, technical and service experts, onboarding, training and education, plus the opportunity to be part of a progressive lending community.



nCino invests more than 27% of our annual revenue (USD \$100m+) into research and development, so you benefit from our continuous innovation roadmap and realise the value and return on your investment more quickly.

With an impressive list of global and local clients comprising traditional, challenger and community-based financial institutions including Yorkshire Building Society, Barclays, Santander, Recognise Bank and AIB, you're in good company.

Glossary

Enterprise-grade platform

Our omni-channel platform is built on Salesforce's highly secure and reliable global infrastructure, proven to improve transparency, efficiency, profitability and regulatory compliance.

Built for bankers by bankers

Deep vertical knowledge across executive banking, technology and service roles means we understand all commercial, cultural and technical aspects of loan origination.

Customisable off-the-shelf solution

Our end-to-end mortgage solution spans the entire origination lifecycle, reducing time from application to completion by 50%, along with reducing cost to income ratios.

Affordable enterprise transformation

A pay-as-you-go SaaS model (Opex rather than Capex) puts enterprise-level software backed by strategic, technical and service resources within reach of all-sized financial institutions.

Integrated data, analytics and security

In-built analytics, centralised data, cyber security and machine learning tools drive intuitive onboarding and continuous efficiency improvements.

Plug into an integrated ecosystem

Access a thriving ecosystem that complements core workflows by leveraging APIs and technology partners to deliver superior capabilities for customers, brokers and employees.

Contact Us

To learn more about nCino's mortgage solution visit <https://www.ncino.com/mortgage/uki>, or get in touch to discuss how we can partner with you to digitally transform your mortgage business.

Request a demo: <https://www.ncino.com/demo>

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