

The Platform Field Guide

Your working document for platform due diligence — from baseline to decision.

ADVISOR NAME

DATE STARTED

TARGET DECISION DATE

STEP 01 Define the Job

Before evaluating any platform, name what your current one stopped doing.

The most common due diligence mistake: evaluating new platforms against each other instead of against what you actually need. You can't hire the right platform until you know exactly what job you're hiring it to do. Answer these questions honestly before your first recruiting conversation.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT PLATFORM FAILING TO DO?

WHAT TRIGGERED THIS EVALUATION NOW?

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE IN YEAR THREE?

WHAT IS NON-NEGOTIABLE IN ANY NEW PLATFORM?

IN ONE SENTENCE — WHAT JOB IS THE NEW PLATFORM BEING HIRED TO DO?

STEP 02 Document Your Baseline

Your current situation. Every platform gets measured against this — not against each other.

Complete the baseline column before you evaluate anything. This is your control variable.

CATEGORY	YOUR BASELINE CURRENT PLATFORM	PLATFORM A	PLATFORM B	PLATFORM C
THE MONEY	← DOCUMENT HONESTLY	← SCORE EACH PLATFORM 1–5 PER ROW		
Platform / BD Name				
Headline Grid / Payout %				
Platform Fee (bps or flat \$)				
Annual E&O + Affiliation (\$)				
Effective Net Payout %*				
Transition Assistance (\$)	N/A			
TA as bps on Advisory AUM	N/A			
TA as % of T-12	N/A			
Note Term (years)	N/A			
MY PRACTICE	← COMPLETE ONCE	← SAME FOR ALL PLATFORMS		
T-12 Revenue (\$)		Same across all columns		
Total AUM (\$)		Same across all columns		
Advisory AUM (\$)		Same across all columns		
Brokerage / Insurance AUM (\$)		Same across all columns		
Advisory / Brokerage Split %		Same across all columns		
THE MOVE	← DOCUMENT HONESTLY	← SCORE EACH PLATFORM 1–5 PER ROW		
Custody Relationship				
Repapering Required?				
Est. Book Transfer Rate %				
Est. Transition Timeline				
Client Disruption Risk				
Back Office / Service Model				
References (Independent)	N/A			
THE MODEL	← DOCUMENT HONESTLY	← SCORE EACH PLATFORM 1–5 PER ROW		

CATEGORY	YOUR BASELINE CURRENT PLATFORM	PLATFORM A	PLATFORM B	PLATFORM C
Channel / Structure				
Fee-Only / Fiduciary?				
Hybrid Option Available?				
Office / Independence				
Succession / Exit Options				
OSJ / Supervision Model				
TOTAL SCORE (of 60)	<i>Baseline</i>			
<i>Key Open Items / Notes</i>				

* Effective Net Payout = Headline Grid minus platform fee, E&O, affiliation, and technology costs. Run the calculator at forgelanepartners.com/the-other-side-of-the-desk

STEP 03 Technology & Services Audit

What you pay for today. What each platform includes.
What you gain or lose.

Technology is the most consistently underestimated cost in a platform move. Document what you have, what it costs, and what each platform includes or charges separately.

TOOL / SERVICE	CURRENT COST/YR	INCLUDED?	PLATFORM A	INCLUDED?	PLATFORM B	INCLUDED?	PLATFORM C
CRM							
Portfolio Mgmt / Reporting							
Financial Planning Software							
Compliance Tools							
Custodial Technology							
Risk / Analytics							
Marketing / CRM Tools							
Other							
Total Annual Tech Cost							
Net Tech Cost Delta vs. Baseline	Baseline						

STEP 04 JTBD Scorecard

Does each platform actually do the job you defined in Step 01?

List the jobs you identified in Step 01. Score each platform 1–5 on how well it performs that job. Weight by importance to you.

JOB TO BE DONE	WEIGHT	BASELINE	PLATFORM A	PLATFORM B	PLATFORM C	NOTES
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JOB TO BE DONE	WEIGHT	BASELINE	PLATFORM A	PLATFORM B	PLATFORM C	NOTES
Weighted JTBD Score		Baseline				

STEP 05 Platform Verdict

Summary scores and your read on each finalist.

PLATFORM A

Comparison Score / 60

JTBD Score

Effective Net %

TA Offer

Tech Delta

Biggest Risk

My read:

PLATFORM B

Comparison Score / 60

JTBD Score

Effective Net %

TA Offer

Tech Delta

Biggest Risk

My read:

PLATFORM C

Comparison Score / 60

JTBD Score

Effective Net %

TA Offer

Tech Delta

Biggest Risk

My read:

FINAL DECISION

PLATFORM SELECTED

DECISION DATE

PRIMARY REASON FOR SELECTION

BIGGEST ACCEPTED RISK

KEY NEGOTIATION POINTS BEFORE SIGNING

OPEN ITEMS TO RESOLVE

WHY FORGE LANE EXISTS

I spent thirty years on the other side of this conversation. Recruiting advisors, building platforms, sitting in the room where the offers got structured. I know how the math gets presented — and I know what doesn't make it into the deck.

What I kept seeing was advisors making the most consequential business decision of their professional lives with nobody in the room working exclusively for them. The recruiter works for the platform. The transition consultant works for the platform. Even the attorney usually doesn't fully understand the economics of what's being signed.

Forge Lane exists because advisors deserve at least one conversation with someone who has no agenda on the other side. I am compensated solely by the firm you choose — no referral fees, no platform incentives, no back-channel arrangements. My only interest is making sure you land in the right place.

That bothered me enough to do something about it.

Rob Engle, MBA

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Run the numbers. Three interactive calculators are available at forgelanepartners.com/the-other-side-of-the-desk — Effective Net Payout, Transition Assistance Interpreter, and RIA Viability Snapshot. Use them to validate the numbers you've documented here.

Want a second set of eyes? Forge Lane provides firm-agnostic transition guidance. I don't represent platforms. I am compensated solely by the firm you choose. Book a Clarity Call at calendly.com/robert-forgelanepartners/30min or call 414-418-2011.

I don't pitch platforms. I help you decide. · One job. Your decision. Not theirs.