What to Do About Chime?

A deep dive on product, marketing spend, and campaign strategy

Written for CEOs, CMOs, and revenue leaders at U.S. community banks and credit unions

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A CO-AUTHORED INDUSTRY BRIEFING

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A note from the authors

This briefing was written together by two complimentary experts on FI growth that are comprised of bankers who have sat in the exact chairs that a bank CMO sits in and works with banking growth leaders every day advising on key strategic questions like product strategy, organizational makeup, data driven opportunity planning, and actual pay for performance campaign execution. We compared notes on Chime and decided one piece, in two voices, would serve our clients better than two pieces in one.

If you run a community bank or credit union, you have heard, by now, every version of the same warning: Chime is taking your customers. Some of that is true, but far from spelling doom, it actually suggests a powerful opportunity for your FI. What follows is the version we wish someone had handed us before our first meeting on the topic — the version that separates what Chime is genuinely good at, what is largely puffery, and what you can do about either.

Executive summary

Chime is the largest U.S. neobank by active membership and, since its June 2025 IPO, the first one with a public filing history detailed enough to underwrite a real benchmark. In the first quarter of 2026, Chime reported its first profitable quarter as a public company. We read the S-1, the first two 10-Qs, and the recent 10-K through one question: what should a $1B–30B community institution actually do differently on Monday morning?

Three findings frame the rest of the document. First, on Product: Chime's advantage is not feature innovation. It is execution on a short list of basics — frictionless onboarding, early direct deposit, transparent overdraft, and a mobile experience that respects the user's attention. Most of those capabilities sit inside the average community bank already or can be quickly activated by working with your digital banking provider. Second, on Marketing Spend: Chime spends roughly $500–700 million a year on marketing, equivalent to ~30% of revenue and a multi-thousand-percent premium, as a share of expense, over the typical community bank. That number is not the threat. The threat is what they are buying with it — a category-defining brand among under-35, debit-heavy consumers who, in many of your markets, would otherwise have walked into your lobby. Third, on Campaign Strategy: Chime runs an always-on, multi-channel, single-message system that compounds. The community-bank equivalent does not require Chime's budget. It requires Chime's discipline.

A note on numbers: where we cite Chime financial data, the source is the S-1 filed in May 2025 ahead of the June 2025 IPO and the FY2025 10-K filed in early 2026. Industry benchmarks for community banks and credit unions draw on FDIC Call Report data, NCUA 5300 data, Cornerstone Advisors' What's Going On In Banking research, Javelin's digital account opening scorecards, and OptimaFI's own campaign benchmarks across more than 200 community institutions. Where a figure should be treated as an estimate rather than a disclosed number, we say so in the text.

1. Product: what Chime actually sells

Spend an hour inside the Chime app and a particular feeling sets in. It is not awe. Its simplicity. Nothing nags you to upgrade. Money arrives a little early – but news flash, most community banks are already processing direct deposits early as well. No artificial minimum balance requirements or "gotcha fees." Just a clean simple way of managing cashflow with a focus on a debit card (which by the way generates fee income via interchange). That is the entire pitch — and that is the entire product. Once you accept that the pitch is the product, the rest of the analysis falls into place.

1.1 Account opening and UX

Frictionless onboarding

Chime advertises an account opening in under two minutes. In our timed tests across legacy bank digital flows in early 2026, the median community-bank online checking opening took 14 minutes when it was completed at all; abandonment at the identity-verification step hovered around 30–40%. Chime does not have a magic KYC vendor. It has done three things community banks usually have not yet taken the steps to simplify. It collects the minimum data required to open, deferring the rest to in-app prompts after funding. It hands the user a virtual debit card immediately, so the reward for finishing the flow shows up inside the same session. And it treats every screen as a conversion surface, not as a policy disclosure surface. Approval, by the way, runs high — Chime's S-1 indicated that a meaningful share of new members fall in the 580–680 FICO range, a band most community banks technically approve but practically discourage. Not disclosed, but likely are back-end controls to manage deposit risk, such as holds on check deposits or tight OD exposure limits.

> **You cannot outspend Chime nationally, but you don't have to. You can apply their lessons to own your specific market niche and one up them with a powerful one-two punch.**

Mobile-first versus traditional bank flows

Most community banks have a mobile app. Most community banks do not have a mobile-first product. The distinction matters. A mobile-first product treats the phone as the primary surface, the browser as a secondary surface, and the branch as an exception path. A community bank app, by contrast, is almost always a translation of the desktop banking site, shrunk and lightly re-skinned. That translation shows up everywhere: in menu hierarchies built around product silos rather than user tasks, in copy that reads like a brochure, in alerts that fire after the fact rather than in time to be useful. None of this requires a core conversion to fix. Much of it requires a product manager with the authority to say no to legacy stakeholders.

1.2 Core product features

No or low fees

Chime's public stance — no monthly fees, no minimum balance fees, no overdraft fees, no foreign transaction fees on debit — is the spine of its brand. Roughly 75% of Chime's revenue comes from interchange on debit transactions, with the balance from MyPay (paycheck advance), SpotMe optional tips, and partner fees. The model makes sense because the account is very low cost to operate at significant scale. The marginal costs for most community banks will be similar, and a community bank has a better chance to expand the relationship beyond just checking.

Early direct deposit

Chime posts direct deposits up to two days early. The mechanic is unglamorous: ACH originators send the credit file in advance of the settlement date, and Chime—like most modern neobanks—releases availability on receipt rather than on settlement. Many community banks can already do this. Many simply do not. Where we have seen institutions turn it on and market it (typically as "get paid two days early"), it is one of the highest-converting features in a direct-deposit acquisition campaign — and direct deposit is the variable most correlated with primary-bank status.

Overdraft approach

SpotMe is Chime's no-fee overdraft, currently up to $200 for qualifying members, with tip-based monetization. The product was launched in 2019 at a $20 limit and raised in stages. Two design choices are worth borrowing. First, the cap is dynamic and tied to member behavior — it grows with you. Second, the experience is opt-in and feels like a favor, not a fee. Community banks that have moved from punitive overdraft economics to a Chime-style buffer plus small-dollar credit offer have generally reported lower service-charge income in year one and offsetting gains in primary-bank conversion, NSF complaint volume, and CRA narrative quality.

Notifications, controls, and the app experience

Chime's notification stack is opinionated. Transaction alerts arrive in seconds, not minutes. Card controls (freeze, unfreeze, transaction type permissions) sit one tap from the home screen. The home screen itself is sparse: balance, recent activity, a single primary action.

This is, frankly, table stakes inside the digital banking platforms most community banks already license. The execution gap is rarely capability — it is configuration, hierarchy, and a willingness to delete features rather than add them.

Messaging around save, spend, and invest

Chime does not market itself as a wealth platform, and that restraint is part of its brand. Save (a roundup-funded savings account paying competitive APY), Spend (the checking and debit core), and a credit-builder secured card are framed as a coherent ladder for an everyday earner: stabilize, build buffer, build credit. Invest is conspicuously absent. Chime has avoided the kitchen-sink super-app posture and the brand benefits from it. The lesson for community banks is not to add fewer products; it is to package the ones you already have around a customer story rather than around your org chart.

1.3 The premium tiers: Chime+ and Chime Prime

In late 2025, Chime introduced Chime+, a premium member status reserved for members with qualifying direct deposit. Members in the tier receive a higher savings APY, faster MyPay access, expanded SpotMe limits, cash-back rewards, and small perks like priority support. Critically, Chime+ is positioned as earned rather than purchased — there is no monthly fee. It is a loyalty tier, not a paid subscription, which is consistent with Chime's no-fee brand.

Then, in April 2026, Chime took the next step with Chime Prime, a higher-value tier for members who make Chime their primary checking account. Prime requires at least $3,000 in qualifying monthly direct deposits and adds a more premium bundle: higher cash back in a selected category, a 3.75% savings APY, travel and lifestyle perks, priority support, a metal card, and access to products like SpotMe, MyPay, and Instant Loans. The details matter less than the design. Chime is not asking customers to pay for premium banking. It is asking them to prove primary-bank behavior.

Two things are worth noting. First, the introduction of Chime+ and Chime Prime is the clearest segmentation move in the company's history, and it tells you Chime now believes a meaningful slice of its base is mature enough — in income, activity, and financial behavior — to warrant differentiated treatment. That is a meaningful shift for a fintech brand historically associated with mass-market, paycheck-cycled consumers. Second, the qualification criterion is direct deposit, not balance. That is the more important signal. Chime is building its loyalty program around payroll primacy, not wealth. For community banks, that should be a useful provocation: most bank relationship programs still reward the customer who already has money; Chime is rewarding the customer who is willing to make the account central to how money moves through their life.

1.4 Value proposition: "low friction" as the primary benefit

If you had to compress Chime's value proposition into two words, they would be low friction — not low fee. Low fee is downstream of low friction. The customer chooses Chime because the experience of using money is less annoying, and the absence of fees is one of the things that makes it less annoying. Community banks tend to lead with the feature (no monthly fee, no minimum balance) and trail with the feeling. Chime does the opposite. The execution implication is large: every screen, every email, every onboarding step should be audited against the question, "does this make money less annoying for the person on the other side?" Anything that fails the test is either reworked or removed.

> **Capability is not the gap. Configuration, hierarchy, and willingness to delete features are the gap.**

1.5 Comparative benchmarking: where banks already win, where they fall short

We get asked, on most calls, for a side-by-side of "what Chime has that we don't." It is, in our experience, the wrong question. The honest answer is that most of the capabilities are already inside the building. The interesting question is execution: which features show up in the customer's actual experience versus living in the release notes. The matrix below is our working answer.

Capability	Chime	Typical regional bank	Typical community bank / CU
Digital account opening in <5 min	Yes — ~2 min	Partial — 10–15 min, high abandonment	Rare — 14+ min, branch-funded fallback
Instant virtual debit card	Yes	Often (newer platforms)	Available on most cores; rarely turned on
Early direct deposit (up to 2 days)	Yes — brand feature	Yes, lightly marketed	Capability commonly present; under-marketed
No-fee small-dollar overdraft buffer	SpotMe up to $200	Mixed — small buffer plus reduced fees	Capability available; punitive economics persist
Real-time transaction alerts & card controls	Yes	Yes	Yes on platform; default-off or buried
Roundup savings to high-yield account	Yes — core feature	Yes (varies)	Available; under-positioned to the customer
Secured credit-builder card	Yes — no fee, no interest	Yes	Yes; rarely marketed to checking customers
Branch access for cash, notarization, complex needs	No — fee-free ATM network only	Yes — declining footprint	Yes — underleveraged advantage
Lending across the relationship (auto, mortgage, HELOC, business)	No (limited consumer credit only)	Yes	Yes — structural advantage
Local underwriting, local empathy, local presence	No	Limited	Yes — the moat

1.6 Implications for community banks

Three product moves consistently outperform on the campaigns we run with community institutions, and all three are inside the building today. First, turn on the features you already pay for: early direct deposit, instant virtual debit card on digital account opening, default-on real-time alerts. Second, rewrite the fee schedule and the disclosure language around the flagship checking product as if Chime's brand team were going to grade it; in most institutions, the language alone produces double-digit lift in completion rate at funding. Third, package what you uniquely have — branch access for messy moments, local underwriting for the loan you cannot get out of Chime, and a banker who remembers your name — as a coherent counter-story, not as scattered talking points. The product is, in the end, the story you let the customer tell about themselves. Chime is winning that story among debit-heavy under-35s. You can win a better one among the families and small businesses who will need their next mortgage, their next SBA loan, and someone to call when something goes wrong.

2. Marketing spend and efficiency

If Section 1 was about what Chime sells, this section is about what Chime spends to sell it. The numbers are large enough to be intimidating and small enough, on a per-account basis, to be instructive. Both things are true.

2.1 Total marketing investment

Chime's marketing and sales expense was $444 million in 2023, $520 million in 2024, and $635 million in 2025 — a 22% year-over-year increase as the company built brand into and through the IPO window. On 2025 revenue of $2.19 billion, that puts marketing at 29% of revenue and 25% of total noninterest expense — a level no full-service bank in the United States approaches, or should.

As a share of total operating expense, marketing has historically been Chime's second-largest line after technology and development. On a balance-sheet relative basis the comparison is harder — Chime is not a balance-sheet institution — but marketing as a share of average assets at Chime sits at roughly 37%, versus a median of 0.07% across the 478 banks with $1B–$100B in assets that report a marketing line — more than five hundred times the bank median. That is by design. Chime is a brand-led acquisition machine wrapped around a debit card; its accounting reflects what it actually is.

The peer-bank picture is more interesting than the headline gap suggests. Across banks with $1B–$10B in assets that report marketing, median marketing spend grew 7.2% in 2025, up from 1.2% in 2024. Among $10B–$100B banks the acceleration was sharper: 10.2% growth in 2025 versus 1.8% in 2024. After two flat years, bank marketing budgets are moving again — but the median bank in our sample still spent only 2.5% of noninterest expense and 0.06% of average assets on marketing. The dollars are growing; the share of the P&L is not.

2.2 Customer acquisition economics

Member growth

Chime ended 2023 with approximately 7.0 million active members, 2024 with approximately 8.2 million, and continued to add members through 2025. "Active" in Chime's definition means a member who made a money movement in the prior calendar month — a tighter and more useful metric than the cumulative "accounts opened" figure the company emphasized in earlier years (~38 million cumulative).

Average revenue per active member sits around $210 on a trailing basis, well below the all-in revenue per primary-checking household at a community institution, which typically runs $400–700 once you include net interest income on deposit float, fees, and the lending and wealth wallet share that travels with a primary banking relationship.   Chime's revenue per active member is structurally lower; it makes up the gap on scale, narrow product depth, and very low servicing cost, but not very different than what a community bank generates on their lowest tier of checking only relationships.

Implied customer acquisition cost

Chime does not disclose CAC directly. The simplest analyst math — marketing spend divided by net new active members — puts the implied 2024 figure in the $400–450 range, and the 2025 figure in a similar zone given the $635 million in marketing spend and continued mid-teens net member adds, though the company itself has indicated, when pressed, that the true cost-per-incremental-active-member after attribution and lifetime cohort adjustments is materially lower (often quoted in the $100–150 band on a brand-blended basis). The truth, as ever, sits in between. Two facts are not in dispute. Chime's payback period is short by neobank standards, on the order of 12–18 months for a typical cohort, but actually longer than the banking average.

2.3 Benchmarking versus banks

The chart-friendly comparison is the one that hides the most. The honest comparison is below.

Metric	Chime (2025)	Typical community bank / CU
Marketing as % of revenue	29%	~1–3% of total revenue; median 2.5% of noninterest expense
Marketing as % of non-interest expense	25.2%	Median 2.5%; top quartile 4.3%, bottom quartile 1.7% ($1B–$100B banks reporting marketing)
Marketing as % of average assets	~37%	~0.07% median (478 banks, $1B–$100B reporting marketing) — Chime is ~500× the bank median
Marketing spend per active member, annual	~$60–80	~$25–60 (highly variable; many under $20)
Implied CAC per new checking account	~$100–450 (range; depends on attribution)	~$3100–500 all-in (OptimaFI, Javelin)
Revenue per active customer / household, annual	~$210	~$400–700 for primary checking households
Acquisition payback (cohort)	~12–18 months	~12–36 months for primary checking – varies widely by approach and partner used to accomplish
Revenue per dollar of marketing spend, 2025	$3.44	Median $51 ($1B–$100B reporting); top quartile $37, bottom quartile $104

Three observations from the table. First, on a per-account basis, the gap is much narrower than the absolute marketing dollars suggest. Chime spends roughly $60–80 per active member per year on marketing; a well-run community institution running a real checking-acquisition program spends a comparable amount on a far higher-LTV household. Second, the headline CAC comparison cuts both ways. If you accept the high end of Chime's implied number ($400–450), the community bank looks competitive. If you accept the low end ($100–150), Chime is acquiring members at roughly a third of community-bank CAC — against a lower-LTV book, but doing so at brand scale. Third, look at the revenue-per-marketing-dollar row: the median bank in our sample generates $51 of revenue for every $1 of marketing spend, the most marketing-intensive quartile of banks generates $37, and Chime generates $3.44. That is the price of brand-led growth in a category where the dominant incumbents are not paying it.

You cannot compete with Chime's national budget. You can compete with Chime's budget in your trade area — and that is the only place that matters.

What it takes to compete in a local market

Chime's national budget is, in any given metro, distributed across whatever share of the market the company indexes against — typically heavier in younger, urban, debit-heavy ZIP codes. A community bank does not need a national budget. It needs a defensible spend in the geographies where its branches, ATMs, and relationships actually serve households. In practice, OptimaFI's campaign benchmarks suggest that a community institution can establish unmistakable share-of-voice in a defined trade area for $5–15 per household per year in working media, plus production and platform fees. That is meaningful money. It is not Chime money. And it is the floor, not the ceiling, of what a serious checking-growth program looks like.

2.4 Implications for community banks

Three implications follow. First, the marketing line in your budget is probably too small and too poorly allocated, but the answer is not to triple it. It is to concentrate it. The data is suggestive: the top quartile of banks by marketing intensity in our sample spends 4.3% of noninterest expense on marketing — about 70% more than the median — but generates only $37 of revenue per dollar of marketing versus the median bank's $51. Spending more is not the same as spending well. A 20% increase in working media in your defined growth markets, paired with a 40% reduction in the number of campaigns you run, is the trade we see produce the most disproportionate returns. Second, the CFO conversation about marketing efficiency has to shift from spend as a percentage of overall expense to ROI or Cost per Acquisition compared to the value generated from those accounts. Community banks have two powerful embedded opportunities that Chime does not have:

Checking Cross-sell - The ability to acquire active checking relationships by cross-selling from existing customers without checking. We typically see the Cost per Account for these programs run half or less than acquiring a pure prospect.

Further Relationship expansion – Chime only recently introduced Chime+, but community banks have a full menu of other products to offer. The foundation of this is a proper relationship expansion focused onboarding program to accelerate wallet expansion and reduce attrition but then followed afterwards with a full relationship expansion cross-sell program to further boost products per household and revenue per household to a 2-4x multiple of what Chime sees.

3. Campaign strategy

This section is the one OptimaFI cares about most, because campaign strategy is the layer where most community institutions either compound their advantages or fritter them away. Chime is a useful teacher here, not because what Chime does is mysterious, but because what Chime does is disciplined.

3.1 Targeting strategy

Chime's primary audience is not, as is often said, "unbanked Americans." It is debit-heavy, paycheck-cycled, under-45, sub-$100K-income, mobile-first consumers, many of whom have a relationship with a traditional bank that is functionally disengaged. The S-1 describes a member base with a median age of approximately 36 and household incomes that skew toward the middle and lower-middle of the U.S. distribution. The strategic insight is that Chime did not invent a new customer; it unbundled the worst-served segment of an existing bank's customer file and gave it a better experience.

That picture is now shifting at the top. With Chime+ and the April 2026 launch of Chime Prime — which requires $3,000+ in monthly direct deposit and bundles a 3.75% savings APY, richer cash back, and premium perks — Chime is deliberately extending up-market toward mass-affluent, primary-deposit households. The core audience has not changed, but the addressable target now stretches further up the income and balance curve than the "under-45, sub-$100K" frame suggests. For community banks, the lesson is that a challenger can climb up-market on the strength of an everyday-banking relationship — the same direction many of you want to travel, from the opposite starting point.

Targeting implications matter for community institutions:

1. Identify the specific audience in your trade area that you are best positioned to win with. This will be slightly different for every bank, but a disciplined process can reveal it.
2. Augment the audience analysis with insight about what segments tend to respond best across the industry to further jump start your testing plan.
3. Constantly refine the targeting based on detailed match back analysis to prioritize the audience that provides the best response to your specific value proposition and brand.

3.2 Channel mix

Chime's working media is split, by our estimate, roughly as follows: 40–50% paid digital (programmatic display, paid social, paid search, streaming audio and CTV); 20–25% brand and partnership (NBA, Dallas Mavericks, athlete and creator partnerships, college NIL); 15–20% referral and incentive (the "refer a friend" engine and member-acquisition bounties); and the balance across CRM, lifecycle, out-of-home in select markets, and earned media. The mix is not exotic. The discipline is. Chime runs the same handful of creative frames across the same handful of channels for long stretches and resists the temptation to rebuild the program every quarter.

For a community institution, the channel mix question is not which channels Chime uses. It is which channels you can credibly own in your trade area. The good news is that identifying a list of your specific high propensity prospects and then running a disciplined targeted multi-channel program against that audience is exactly what OptimaFi excels at doing every day.

This is the playbook that your peers are using today to win again against chime:

1. Identify the right audience (already covered).
2. Consistently reach that audience across multiple channels that work together to deliver relevant messages everywhere your prospects spend time and attention including Connected TV (CTV/OTT), social media, various websites/mobile apps (targeted Display ads), and even streaming audio.
3. Refine the mix over time based on testing and learning what drives prospects all the way down the purchase funnel from awareness to engagement/consideration to funded account opening.

You get tired to messages way before your prospects because they may see it for a few seconds every week while you see it for hours.

3.3 Messaging

Chime's messaging architecture is unusually simple. There is one promise (banking that has your back). There are three or four supporting product points (no fees, early direct deposit, SpotMe, build credit). There is one emotional through-line (dignity for the everyday earner). And there is a recurring visual and verbal system you can spot from a moving car. The creative changes; the message does not.

Community institutions tend to do the opposite. The message changes every campaign — a checking offer in February, a HELOC push in April, a refi nudge in July, a back-to-school savings ad in August. The creative carries little continuity. The institution's brand promise, where there is one, is rarely the spine of the campaign. The single most consequential decision a community bank or credit union CMO can make is to deliver relevant messages to a specific audience that has the capacity and propensity to respond and do that every day with refinements guided by testing/learning.

3.4 Always-on versus random acts of marketing

Chime is always-on. There is no Q1 push and Q3 lull; the program runs continuously, with creative refreshes, channel rebalancing, and offer tuning happening inside a steady delivery cadence. The financial implication is meaningful: an always-on program compounds attribution, audience learning, and creative iteration in a way a stop-start campaign cannot.

Most community institutions run the opposite pattern: bursty, project based, with media on for six to ten weeks at a time and then off entirely. The bursts hit hard but the audience forgets between flights, and every relaunch pays the discovery tax again. The shift to always-on does not require a larger budget. It requires reallocating the same budget across the year, with a smaller hero campaign in each quarter sitting atop a steady baseline of brand, paid search defense, and lifecycle nurture. In our experience, the same dollars spent in an always-on shape consistently outperform the campaign-shape equivalent by 20–40% on cost-per-funded-account.

3.5 Funnel structure: acquisition to activation

Chime's funnel is best understood as four stages: awareness (brand), consideration (paid digital, referral), conversion (account opening, instant virtual card), and activation (direct deposit set-up, debit usage, SpotMe enrollment). The most studied stage — acquisition — is, in fact, not the one where Chime wins. The wins concentrate at activation. Within the first 30 days of opening, Chime relentlessly nudges the new member to set up direct deposit, make a first debit purchase, enable SpotMe, and refer a friend. Activation, defined as direct deposit on file, is the single variable most predictive of long-term member value, and Chime's product and CRM are organized around it.

For community institutions, the activation pattern is the most copy-able. A new checking customer who has not switched direct deposit within 30 days is, by our data, four to seven times more likely to churn or to slide into single-product-relationship status than one who has. The infrastructure required to fix this is not exotic: a clear in-app and email sequence in the first 14 days, a simple direct-deposit switch tool, a debit-usage incentive in the first 30 days, and a banker call (or, for purely digital openings, a CRM-driven outreach) at day 45 for any household that has not activated. The improvement in primary-banking conversion rates from this single sequence — across the institutions we have worked with — is consistently larger than the improvement from any acquisition tactic.

3.6 What community banks should steal

Five things, in priority order. One: an always-on media architecture in your defined trade area, with creative and message discipline measured in years, not quarters. Two: a systematic 120 day onboarding program for every new to bank household, organized with specific messaging sequences for each behavioral segment to rapidly accelerate wallet expansion and boost retention. Three:

Data driven program that intentionally optimizes based on audience, offer, channel mix, and messaging to consistently deliver tangible ROI.

4. Putting it together

For the CEO

The strategic question Chime poses is not, “should we build a neobank?” It is, “are we executing on the customer experience and the brand discipline our existing model already entitles us to?” On almost every call we have on this topic, the honest answer is: not yet. The capabilities are inside the building. The brand is inside the community. The customer file is inside the institution. The work is to remove the friction, name the promise, and run a campaign program designed to compound rather than to refresh. None of that requires Chime’s budget. All of it requires Chime’s discipline and willingness to spend money in the right areas to get a tangible return.

For the CMO and revenue leader

Five priorities follow directly from the analysis. Audit your account-opening flow against a two-minute Chime benchmark and remove every step you cannot defend on customer-value grounds. Turn on the features you already pay for and market them like they are new.

Start by re-allocating your budget into a data driven multi-channel engine that delivers tangible tracking of new to bank households and then once that is proven leverage insight from industry experts to make the case to scale up the budget to deliver even more account, balance, and revenue growth.

For the rest of the C-suite

There is a temptation, in any era of fintech ascendance, to either dismiss the threat (“they don’t make money on a loan, they’ll be a footnote”) or to over-rotate into imitation (“we need to be a neobank too”). Both are mistakes. Chime is a real institution — public, profitable in periods, and brand-defining for a segment of the U.S. consumer. It is not, however, going to displace a well-run community bank or credit union among the households that need a real banker, a real loan, and a real branch. Your job, in the boardroom and at the all-staff meeting, is to keep the institution honest about both halves of that sentence.

About the authors

Capital Performance Group

Capital Performance Group is a strategy consulting firm working with banks, credit unions, and other financial institutions on enterprise strategy, growth, performance management, and customer experience. CPG’s engagements range from board-level strategic planning to detailed program design across retail, commercial, wealth, and payments.

OptimaFI

OptimaFI, formerly known as Infusion Marketing Group, has spent more than two decades helping U.S. community banks and credit unions grow checking households, deposits, and primary banking relationships through always-on, data-driven campaigns. The firm’s campaign benchmarks draw on engagements with more than 200 community institutions across the country. Optima FI actively invests our money in client success through a pay-for-results billing structure that has delivered over $30 billion in deposits and loans to clients.

Authors’ note on data

Quantitative figures attributable to Chime Financial, Inc. are sourced from the company’s S-1 filing (May 2025), subsequent 10-Q filings, and the FY2025 10-K. Community bank benchmark figures are drawn from FDIC Call Report data, NCUA 5300 data, and published research from OptimaFI, Javelin Strategy & Research, and the ABA Bank Marketing benchmarking surveys. Estimates derived from analyst math or OptimaFI’s proprietary campaign database are identified as such in the text.