BankPlus × OptimaFI

CASE STUDY

# How BankPlus turned a pilot into a long-term growth engine with OptimaFI

## Key Results

| $250M+ | 75% | 3+ |
| --- | --- | --- |
| In new deposits within six months | Pilot program funds involved genuinely new money | Year relationship between BankPlus and OptimaFI |

OptimaFI

OVERVIEW

### How OptimaFI helped

BankPlus moved from skeptic to committed partner — expanding from a targeted deposit pilot to an ongoing, multi-product growth strategy built on predictable performance and internal alignment.

### Core Challenge

Urgent need for deposit funding without cannibalizing or repricing the existing customer base.

### About Bank Plus

AUM: ~$8B in assets

Locations: 70+ financial centers across Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Florida

Solutions: Acquire, Onboard, Cross Sell

## What started as a test became a template

Three years ago, Rob Armour had a healthy skepticism about third-party vendors. As BankPlus's chief marketing and product development officer, he'd seen enough overpromised partnerships to know that a compelling pitch rarely told the whole story.

OptimaFI got in the door not because of what they promised, but because of what they were willing to put at risk.

> "As a banker, you have so many vendors trying to sell you something. Things that sound too good to be true usually are. What got them in the door was the Pay for Performance model — it took a lot of the risk out of it."

**Rob Armour**
Chief Innovation Officer, BankPlus

The agreement was simple: BankPlus would only pay for accounts that were actually opened. No retainers, no broad campaign spend, no hope-for-the-best media buys. A pilot first, and then — if it worked — more.

It worked. The predictable performance forced the executive team to 'fish or cut bait' on their vendor skepticism, and BankPlus never looked back.

## The model that changed how BankPlus thinks about marketing spend

What the Pay for Performance model gave BankPlus wasn't just accountability; it changed the internal conversation entirely.

Instead of debating whether a campaign was worth the budget, the executive team could sit down together, evaluate the product and the price, and make a simple decision: is this worth it to us at this rate? If yes, how much do we want?

> "You've got to quit looking at it as an expense. You know what the return is going to be because you can do the math. So it's really an investment — not a budget line."

**Rob Armour**
Chief Innovation Officer, BankPlus

That framing — marketing as investment rather than cost — made it easier to get leadership alignment and easier to set clear goals. The bank's CEO, CFO, and relevant stakeholders could all sit in the same room, agree on a product and a price point, decide on a target volume, and move forward with confidence.

It also solved a persistent skeptic problem. When results came back matching — or exceeding — what OptimaFI had forecast, the proof was built into the process itself.

> "The proof is in the process, as long as you go through it the right way."

**Rob Armour**
Chief Innovation Officer, BankPlus

CHALLENGE

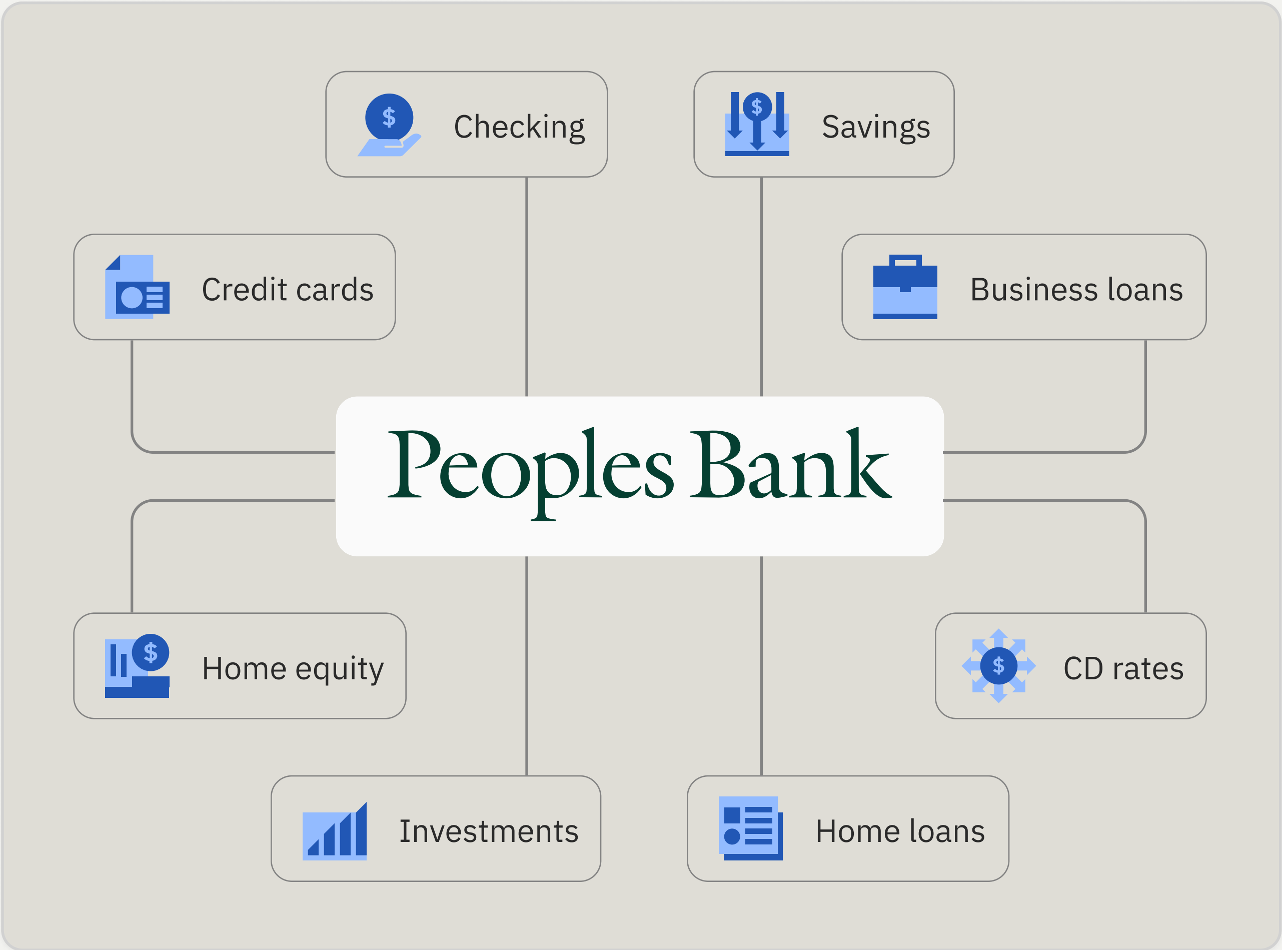
# Funding the balance sheet — without repricing what you already have

When BankPlus first engaged OptimaFI three years ago, the strategic need was clear: deposits. The bank needed funding for loan growth, and it needed it without cannibalizing existing balances by repricing the customer base.

That's a tension every community bank knows well. Broad campaigns like billboards, newspaper ads, or mass email tend to expose offers to the entire customer base, which means you risk disintermediating your own funds. A significant portion of the 'new' money coming in is really just existing deposits being repriced at a higher rate. Thus, the net effect on the balance sheet is often far smaller than the headline number suggests.

### What success required

- Growing deposits without repricing existing balances
- Precision targeting: reaching the right customers, not the broadest audience
- Predictable, measurable performance before committing spend
- Internal alignment across the executive team
- A funding mechanism that could flex with changing strategic needs




SOLUTION

# Sub-segment targeting that protects what you already have

Rather than broad outreach, OptimaFI's approach starts with behavioral and propensity modeling, which means identifying the sub-segments of a bank's customer base most likely to respond to a given product, and then targeting only those groups.

At a bank with 200,000–250,000 customers, that might mean a campaign focused on 3,000 or 5,000 people, *not everyone*. The tradeoff is that the economics work: OptimaFI can afford to invest in sustained digital outreach for a tightly defined group in a way that a broad campaign simply can't support.

For BankPlus, that precision showed up directly in the quality of the deposits they brought in. Of the more than $250 million raised in their initial six-month pilot, 75% was genuinely new money; funds that came from other institutions, not from existing BankPlus customers moving balances.

> "If we go out and get all this money in, and we've repriced 60 or 70% of our deposits in the process, no matter how much new money we got, that's a loser. The way OptimaFI targets those sub-segments — where we're not exposing certain parts of our customer base to the rate — we don't have to worry about that as much."

**Rob Armour**
Chief Innovation Officer, BankPlus

## Digital marketing that follows — not flashes

One of the clearest differentiators Rob observed was how OptimaFI's campaigns held up over time. Traditional campaigns tend to spike early: a burst of response in the first few weeks, then a long tail-off. It's a pattern so common in banking that most institutions build it into their expectations.

OptimaFI's approach works differently. By appending IP addresses and following prospects across devices and platforms with repeated exposures over a sustained period, the response curve stays remarkably consistent across a full campaign quarter.

> "With a traditional campaign, you get a spike in the beginning and then it tails off. With OptimaFI, the response rate held consistent throughout the whole quarter. I didn't believe that was going to happen — but it has held true in our campaigns."

**Rob Armour**
Chief Innovation Officer, BankPlus

## A fraction of the cost, a multiple of the results

BankPlus ran its own in-house email campaign to a specific audience, with a $100–150 cash incentive for new account openings. Only a handful of accounts opened.

OptimaFI targeted that same segment using their digital marketing methodology; no cash incentive. Accounts opened at a rate Rob estimated at roughly 150 per quarter over the first year.

By his estimate, OptimaFI's approach was significantly more effective. And that was without a bonus offer.

> "I know their marketing methodology works because I've compared it against things we've done in house. They came in with no offer and used their digital marketing structure — and the response was something like 150 accounts per quarter for the first year. It was over 10 times more effective."

**Rob Armour**
Chief Innovation Officer, BankPlus

That comparison gave Rob the confidence to expand beyond Pay for Performance campaigns, using OptimaFI's marketing infrastructure for specialized mortgage programs and other product launches where precision and measurability mattered.

### WHAT YEAR THREE ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

## From deposits-only to a balanced growth strategy

The original engagement was almost entirely focused on the liability side of the balance sheet: deposits, and lots of them. That was the strategic priority at the time, and it's what the first chapter of BankPlus's OptimaFI story is built around.

Three years in, the balance has shifted. BankPlus's deposit needs are well-managed, and attention has turned to loan growth, including consumer and residential loan categories that the bank deliberately set aside in the early days.

OptimaFI conducts an opportunity assessment for each bank that maps out where the institution is underperforming relative to peers, typically eight to ten opportunity areas across the balance sheet. In the beginning, BankPlus focused on the deposit-side opportunities and left the rest on the shelf. Now, with a more balanced strategic picture, those loan categories are coming back into play.

> "We went back to the sheet and looked at some of those loan categories we basically ignored for the first two years. We're starting to incorporate some of the ones we purposely did not do in the beginning."

**Rob Armour**
Chief Innovation Officer, BankPlus

## New product launches on the horizon

BankPlus is also preparing to bring several new products to market, and OptimaFI is already part of the launch strategy. Rather than relying on broad awareness campaigns for new offerings, the bank sees OptimaFI's precision targeting and behavioral data as a natural fit for reaching the right customers from day one.

> "We have some products we haven't launched yet that will be technologically sophisticated when they come out. I think that will be a great opportunity to use OptimaFI on some new product launches because they'll have the data behind that."

**Rob Armour**
Chief Innovation Officer, BankPlus

RESULTS

## $250M+ in deposits from a six-month pilot — and counting

The numbers from BankPlus's initial pilot have been well-documented: more than $250 million in deposits generated in six months, with 75% representing genuinely new money. But what the original story didn't fully capture is what happens after the pilot ends.

For BankPlus, the answer is: you keep going. The bank has run campaigns consistently since the pilot, hit its annual spend cap in the third or fourth quarter most years, and continued to see results track closely to what OptimaFI's models predicted at the outset.

## A decisive edge over in-house campaigns

In a head-to-head test against BankPlus's own efforts — same audience, BankPlus with a cash incentive, OptimaFI without one — Rob estimates OptimaFI's digital methodology generated more than 10 times the account openings.

## Consistent quarterly response rates

Unlike traditional campaigns that spike and fade, BankPlus's OptimaFI campaigns hold their response rate throughout a full quarter, a pattern that has proven out consistently across multiple campaign cycles.

## Internal alignment that compounds over time

Perhaps the less visible result: a repeatable internal process for evaluating, approving, and launching growth campaigns, one that has steadily brought more of BankPlus's leadership team into the work and made marketing spend feel less like a bet and more like a decision.

> "You've got to quit looking at it as an expense. You know what the return is going to be because you can do the math. When you sit down with that pro forma, it shifts the whole conversation from a budget line item to a predictable investment."

**Rob Armour**
Chief Innovation Officer, BankPlus

## Advice for institutions just getting started

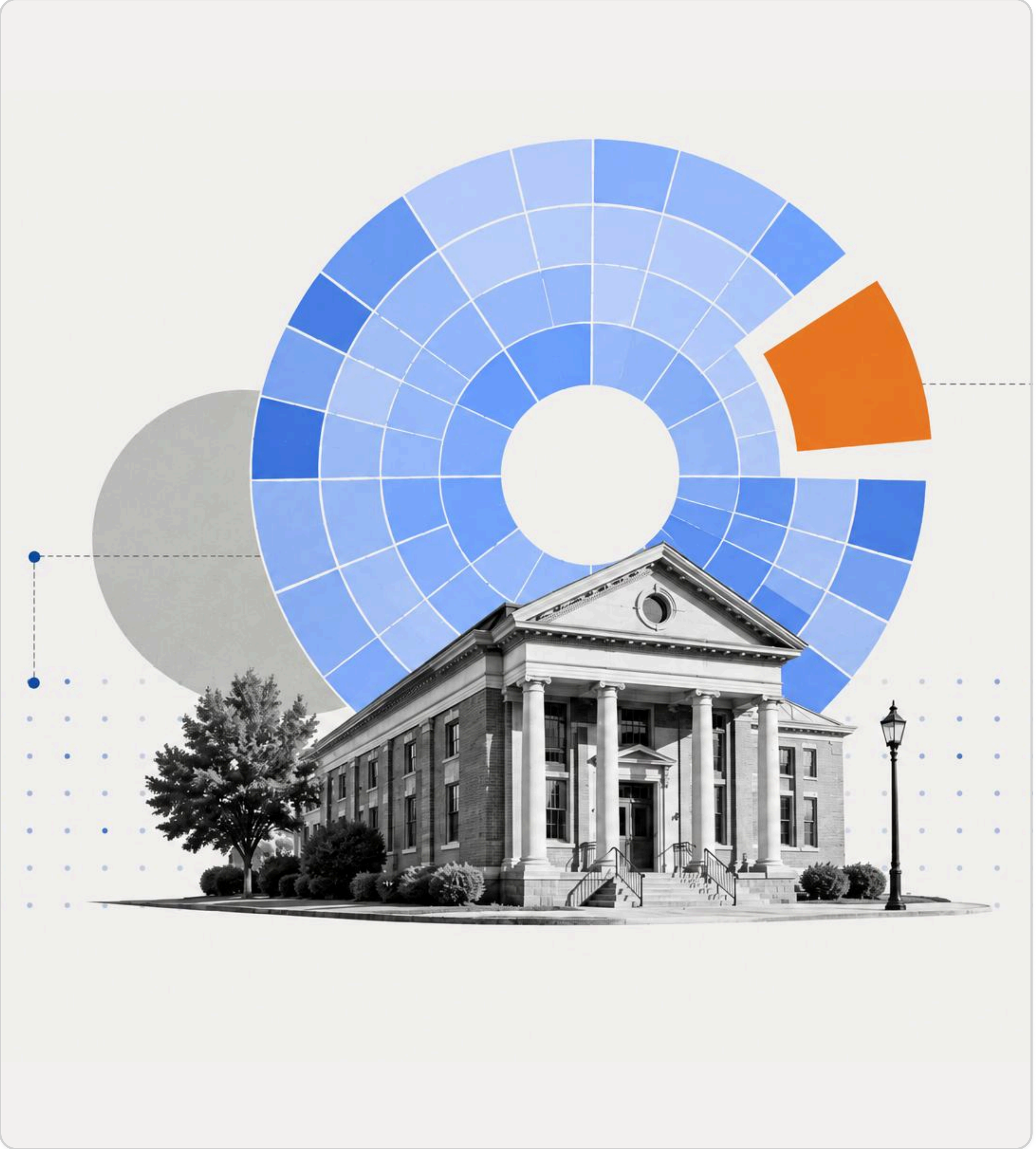
For community banks and credit unions finishing their first OptimaFI pilot and wondering what comes next, Rob's advice is straightforward: stay in the process, and keep bringing people into it.

> "The only way you can get in trouble with this is if you don't get the buy-in from everybody else. Keep exposing people to the predictive models and then the results. Everybody gets on the same page and you're all going in the same direction."

**Rob Armour**
Chief Innovation Officer, BankPlus

## About BankPlus

BankPlus is a Mississippi-based financial institution with nearly $8 billion in assets and more than 80 financial centers across Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Florida. Committed to serving its communities with a full range of personal and business banking services, BankPlus has been a trusted financial partner across the Gulf South for more than a century.



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