

Proving the Power of Brand Marketing

Chesapeake Bank's Growth Story

The Performance Marketing Trap vs. The Power of Brand Marketing

In an era dominated by hyper-targeted performance marketing and immediate cost-per-acquisition (CPA) metrics, financial institutions face a common pitfall: over-allocating budgets to lower-funnel demand capture while starving upper-funnel demand generation. Capturing existing intent only works until the pool of aware consumers runs dry.

Sustainable growth requires building brand equity and emotional resonance before consumers enter the buying window.

Big banks spend millions shouting about products, and community banks often get drowned out. For Chesapeake Bank, the challenge was standing out against massive national footprints across both legacy markets and competitive growth markets.

Rather than chasing short-term product conversions, **initiate-it deployed a pure, high-impact brand-awareness campaign designed to build long-term equity and emotional resonance.** Following a full year of executing this comprehensive strategy, backed by baseline and follow-up research from Alan Newman Research, the data proves an undeniable truth: **dedicated brand marketing cuts through the noise and fundamentally moves the consumer needle.**



Strategic Media Architecture & Agency Execution

Unlike standard product-push campaigns, this initiative focused entirely on building enduring brand equity and affinity for the Chesapeake Bank name.

initiate-it provided comprehensive agency support across the following scope:

Paid media audit

Paid media strategy,
planning, & buying

Paid search/SEM/Google
Ads strategy & execution

Content & creative
asset audit

Ongoing performance
marketing reporting

Quarterly reporting
scorecards

Ongoing paid media
optimizations

Annual Report
coordination

Account & project
management support

SEO audit &
recommendations

Strategic Media Pillars

Targeted Geographic Mix: Focused messaging precisely tailored to balance legacy brand strength with aggressive footprint expansion in growth markets like Richmond and Chesterfield.

High-Value Broadcast & Live Events: Positioned ads during peak cultural viewing moments, including live sports and live entertainment, to secure massive, non-skippable audiences at predefined times for maximum recall.

Streaming Audio Integration: Capitalized on warmer months and increased outdoor activity by strategically introducing streaming audio into the media mix based on seasonality.

Digital & Social Amplification: Maintained a continuous and vast digital presence, leveraging platforms like Facebook and Instagram where research confirmed significant audience concentration and engagement.

Data-Backed Results & Impact Metrics

A comparison against the baseline research highlights substantial growth across nearly every core marketing funnel metric following a full year of executing the new strategy:

Surging Total Awareness: Total aided awareness of Chesapeake Bank in the Greater Richmond region grew significantly from 49% in 2025 to 57% in 2026 (+8 percentage points).

Deepened Consumer Familiarity: Familiarity with the brand climbed from 13% to 21%, while respondents stating they had "never heard of" the bank dropped sharply from 51% to 43%.

Sharpened Ad Recall & Messaging: Aided ad recall increased from 8% to 13% overall, led by a massive surge among adults ages 25–45 (jumping from 7% to 20%). Furthermore, aided recall of the core brand slogan, "The Chesapeake Way," more than doubled.

Favorable Brand Impression: Overall brand impression increased significantly by 10 percentage points, with two-thirds of audiences expressing a favorable view of the advertising.



Key Takeaway

Brand Awareness Drives Conversion Intent

The key finding of this research lies in the direct link between upper-funnel brand exposure and lower-funnel purchase intent.

Immediate Lift in Consideration:

When exposed to the campaign messaging during the tracking research study, consumer consideration experienced a dramatic **+22 percentage point increase**.

Healthy Funnel Conversion:

Chesapeake Bank maintains a **strong 47% conversion rate** from familiarity to consideration, performing competitively alongside legacy institutions and demonstrating that effective upper-funnel brand awareness directly feeds lower-funnel intent.

Let's Talk About What's Next for Your Brand

Navigating the balance between brand awareness and performance marketing requires a strategic partner who knows how to move the needle where it counts most. **At initiate-it, we combine data-backed media planning with cross-channel execution to build enduring brand equity and drive measurable business growth.**

Whether you are looking to expand into new markets, sharpen your channel mix, or validate your marketing ROI through custom research, we are here to help you navigate what's next.

Get in Touch

Contact us today for a customized digital strategy consultation to discover how initiate-it can transform your brand's reach and impact.

Sarah Prokopchak
sprokopchak@initiate-it.com
804.513.3096

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initiate-it has been a tremendous partner in helping Chesapeake Bank grow brand awareness across our key markets. They work seamlessly alongside our internal team and agency partners, bringing a collaborative approach grounded in consumer research and data. What I value most is their commitment to continually optimizing our media strategy, not just to improve performance, but to make Chesapeake Bank stand out in a “sea of sameness.”

Matthew Suttmiller

Assistant VP, Director of Marketing,
Chesapeake Bank