

Presentation skills coaching empowers executives to deliver impactful messages

THE SITUATION

Vans is a leading action sports footwear, apparel and accessory company and an iconic youth culture brand that's distributed in more than 170 countries worldwide. The challenge of delivering a lifestyle brand driven by creative self-expression demands a clear understanding of company goals and initiatives across the organization.

Each year, Vans brings together over 400 employees for a global positioning event called GPS Day. This day is dedicated to communicating the company's plans for the year, aligning goals by department, building trust and generating enthusiasm. At this all-important meeting, top Vans executives are tasked with delivering a message that will resonate for company employees and inspire action throughout the year.

THE OPPORTUNITY

"Our GPS event is critical in ensuring we gain understanding, trust, and confidence across our business," says Cheryl Van Doren, VP of Human Resources and a daughter of Vans founder. Each year since 2011, Cheryl has engaged Stephanie Scotti of Professionally Speaking to work with Vans' top talent leaders to enhance their executive presence and prepare them to deliver an impactful performance on GPS Day. Stephanie provides one-on-one coaching to executives to help them develop a clear message and hone their presentation skills.

Cristy Johnson worked with Stephanie after she was promoted to VP of Retail Operations in 2011. According to Cristy, she was so afraid to make a mistake on stage that she over-prepared and memorized her speech, which made her come across as less authentic.

Stephanie's coaching gave Cristy the tools she needed to feel more confident and in control. They worked on crafting her message, developing a more visual presentation, and even refining her stance on stage. As a result, Cristy has learned to be more comfortable in the moment, to be flexible, and to truly connect with her audience. She now spends 90% less time preparing and gets results that are better than ever. After a recent manager's meeting, Christy's boss praised her performance as the best she'd ever done.

Vicki Redding faced a difficult challenge when she first joined Vans as VP of Apparel in 2013. Just 7 weeks into her new position, she was asked to present the company's strategic initiatives at GPS Day. Over a period of several weeks, Vicki worked with Stephanie to develop a clear, concise and memorable message that told a story rather than relying on facts and figures. They rehearsed both virtually and in-person to help Vicki improve her storytelling, calm her nerves, and excel in her delivery.

"Stephanie gets to the root of your biggest fear about presenting," says Vicki. "She is able to talk you thorough that so you can let it go, get out of your head, and connect with the audience." Stephanie's coaching helped to increase Vicki's confidence and maximize the impact of her presentation.

THE RESULTS

At Vans' GPS Day, the stakes are high. To ensure the success of the company's yearly objectives, the message must be well-defined and memorable to the audience. Stephanie's coaching has enabled executives to clearly communicate Vans' business direction and goals to its employees.

"Stephanie is my all-time favorite coach, and I've had a lot of them," explains Cristy Johnson. "I give her credit to be able to come to a brand like Vans and be able to connect with us on a human level. She teaches and models that. I appreciate her coaching so much that I invited her back to work with my district managers. All 16 of them contacted me afterwards saying 'You were right! She is amazing!' They all felt so much more confident in their ability to deliver their message."

Vicki Redding has also made great strides in building her presentation skills.

"After each time I worked with Stephanie, I had people come up to me and repeat back to me what I had said in the presentation, which really proved to me that they had gotten the message. They understood my initiatives and my focus, and they were excited about it. Even a year later, people still refer back to what I said. Now that's impactful!"

Today, Stephanie continues to work with Vans, providing both one-on-one coaching and group training on executive presence, facilitation skills, presentation skills, and speech consultation. According to Cheryl Van Doren, Vans' ongoing relationship with Stephanie has had far-reaching consequences across the organization.

"Stephanie has integrated very well within our organization. She develops a very safe coaching environment that allows each individual to truly achieve success. In many cases, these individuals continue to seek out Stephanie's assistance for special projects, to prepare for a key presentation, or to freshen up their skills. That alone says a lot to me about the confidence they have in her abilities."