



T R A I N E R

Trainer Success Story Wachovia



Curing a Culture of Silence

Nicole Haydon, Vice President, Executive and Leadership Development, Wachovia

Wachovia is a diversified financial services company that provides a broad range of retail banking and brokerage, asset and wealth management, and corporate and investment banking products and services. They are one of the largest providers of financial services in the United States.

THE SITUATION

In 2006, Nicole Glasrud Haydon, Psy.D., was responsible for resolving an unusual issue: Wachovia's culture was nice—too nice. Trained as a clinical psychologist, she had parlayed her experience into her role as a learning strategist at banking giant Wachovia. She was part of a team responsible for leadership development for the company's 12,000 international leaders and managers.

Nicole's concern was confirmed when the bank's regular internal surveys revealed many employees felt the workplace was an environment in which people didn't address conflict. Wachovia employees prided themselves on their relationship-oriented culture; however, that cultural dynamic resulted in an atmosphere of conflict avoidance.

"Our problem was rooted in passive-aggressiveness," said Haydon, who is now vice president for executive and leadership development at Wachovia. "People just didn't know how to confront problems in a productive way."

Not returning calls or e-mails and shifting directions on previously agreed-upon decisions without consulting stakeholders were just a few symptoms Wachovia was dealing with.

"There was resentment and frustration as a result of these behaviors, but it was never addressed," Haydon said. "There was a lot of water cooler talk or side conversations, but you knew the frustrated party would never actually confront the other person. So, the problems persisted and spiraled."

To transform this culture of silence, Haydon and a colleague were tasked with finding a training solution that would help company leaders address conflict.

THE TRAINING COURSE

After hearing others rave about VitalSmarts Crucial Confrontations Training, Haydon attended a two-day public workshop in the spring of 2006 to see the program firsthand. She was looking to see if the course was effective, and most importantly, if it would fit Wachovia's culture of respect. What she saw made the decision easy.

"Since Wachovia has a relationship-oriented culture, being able to confront someone while maintaining the relationship was critical. After attending the workshop, I knew right away we had to do this training," she said. She immediately scheduled four open-enrollment sessions for the fall.

"The sessions were filled with a waiting list before we even did the pilot," Haydon said. "People were willing to travel. They were so starved for the idea of being able to hold a confrontation in a way that resolved the problem and also saved the relationship."

Haydon's role was to develop a cadre of certified trainers, coordinate their assignments, and facilitate the course herself from time to time. Her team offered Crucial Confrontations twice a month at different locations around the country, with class sizes capped at twenty. They also offered courses for intact teams.

Haydon also served as a champion of Crucial Confrontations within Wachovia. She presented the content to key leaders. In 2008, when worldwide banking woes hit Wachovia, Haydon gave primers on leading in turbulent times using the Crucial Confrontations material. These tailored presentations led to even more participants signing up for the course.

THE RESULTS

To date, more than 650 leaders have completed the two-day Crucial Confrontations course.

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— Nicole Haydon, VP
Executive Leadership
Development, Wachovia

"Crucial Confrontations has started to become part of our culture," Haydon said. "People are speaking the language and effectively going through the model to resolve conflict with each other."

Haydon also says participants appreciate the many applications of the content, both inside and outside the workplace. "These skills don't only work between managers and employees," Haydon said. "Crucial Confrontations works in all directions and that's what makes it so powerful. That's why people have embraced it and championed it."

Survey results confirm employees' satisfaction with the program. According to results, 95 percent of respondents favorably view the course as clearly relating to their jobs and 93 percent of respondents intend to use the skills on the job.

A senior leader reported: "Crucial Confrontations allows us to stretch and challenge our peers

to take our company to the next level of performance and in a way that's consistent with our core values of mutual respect, teamwork, and integrity."

Another participant wrote, "I have taken a number of courses over the years, but this one was the best. I feel I am better equipped to deal with any number of situations that come my way. This was money well spent."

After the pilot and initial open enrollment sessions were so successful, Haydon explored the option to offer a two-day training course to trainees stationed around the country. She appreciated the cooperation that VitalSmarts offered in adjusting the program to fit her company's needs.

"As a facilitator and program manager, VitalSmarts has given me the flexibility to decide how we will roll out the training and how we can customize the content to incorporate our corporate values and really tailor it to our needs," she said.

This flexibility was key to one of Haydon's favorite internal success stories. After a brief presentation of Crucial Confrontations to the company's top two hundred leaders, one of them requested the training for his top sixty leaders. However, he was concerned about pulling them away for two days of training. Haydon customized a solution where the participants conducted in-depth preparation on their own before gathering for one day of training.

"The feedback was unbelievable," Haydon said. "After the first session, people told the executive that this was the best course they had ever taken, and that it needed to be longer. He had never heard people complain that training was too short!"

"I absolutely without hesitation recommend this course," Haydon said. "If everyone took this course, the world would be a better place."



About VitalSmarts Trainer Certification—VitalSmarts Trainer Certification offers organizations a training delivery option that returns real results in a flexible, cost-effective, and powerful way. Designed to provide people with bestpractice trainer skills to roll out Crucial Confrontations Training in their organization, the certification process ensures the high-leverage skills learned in the Crucial Confrontations public workshops will have measurable impact across the organization. Those certified to train Crucial Confrontations add value by offering customizable, award-winning training that solves the organization's most pressing problems.

About VitalSmarts—An innovator in corporate training and organizational performance, VitalSmarts helps teams and organizations achieve the results they care about most. With award-winning training products based on more than thirty years of ongoing research, VitalSmarts has helped more than three hundred of the Fortune 500 realize significant results using a proven method for driving rapid, sustainable and measurable change in behaviors. VitalSmarts has been ranked twice by *Inc.* magazine as one of the fastest-growing companies in America and has taught more than 2 million people worldwide. VitalSmarts is home to multiple training offerings, including Crucial Conversations®, Crucial Confrontations™, and Influencer Training™. Each course improves key organizational outcomes by focusing on high-leverage skills and strategies. Along with *Influencer*, their latest book, the VitalSmarts authors have written two other *New York Times* bestsellers, *Crucial Conversations* and *Crucial Confrontations*. VitalSmarts also offers on-site consulting, research, executive team development, and speaking engagements.