SPEC CAMPAIGN · CASE STUDY · 2026

VANS

PROPERTY OF THE SHOP.

A campaign that gives every independent skate shop its own checkerboard — and hands the brand back to the people who built it.



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THE CORE SHOP IS CLOSING.

Vans earned its credibility in independent skate shops: the counter, the wall of decks, the owner who knows your name. Most of the brand’s volume now moves through big retail and online, and the shops that made it matter are disappearing one lease at a time.

The ask, as I’d write it: re-earn the core without a celebrity, a collab or a big media buy. Make the shop the hero again, and make Vans the reason the shop gets talked about.

Self-initiated brief. Not commissioned by Vans; no Vans trademarks reproduced. The wordmark on these slides is set in a generic condensed grotesk.

NOBODY SAYS “I SKATE VANS.” THEY SAY THE SHOP.

The shop is the identity. The shoe is the uniform. A campaign that talks about the shoe competes with every other sneaker ad; a campaign that talks about the shop has no competition at all.

EVERY SHOP GETS ITS OWN CHECKER.

Every independent shop that stocks Vans receives a checkerboard of its own: the shop’s colour, the shop’s name, a code only its regulars know. Vans makes the shoe. The shop owns the checker.

One line, three words on every piece: **Property of the shop.**



ONE RULE. INFINITE SHOPS.

Toe stays classic.

The black-and-white checker holds the toe on every shoe. That’s the Vans part.

Heel goes local.

From the heel back, the shop’s colour takes over the checker. That’s the shop’s part.

Name, same type.

The shop’s name is set in the same condensed grotesk as the brand, never larger than it.

A generator, not a designer.

Shop name + HEX in, full kit out: shoe, sign, sticker, four social frames. Any shop can be live in a day.



Palette rule: one shop colour against paper, or one shop colour against ink. Never two shop colours on one shoe.

SIX SHOPS, SIX CHECKERS.













Shop names are fictional stand-ins for the deck. In the real programme every kit is built from the shop's own name and a colour the owner picks.

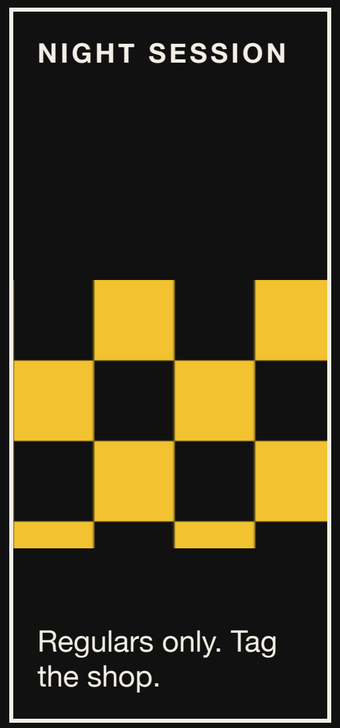
SHOT BY THE SHOP. REPOSTED BY VANS.











Four frames per shop come out of the generator. The shop posts them; regulars tag the shop, not the brand. Vans' own channels only repost.

Formats: 9:16 story, 4:5 feed, 1:1 sticker, 16:9 cover. Type and colour only, so a shop with a phone can match them with its own footage.

ONE WALL PER CITY. PAINTED BY THE SHOP.



No media buy. One hand-painted wall near each shop, in the shop’s checker, with the shop’s name and nothing else. The wall is the ad and the ad is the address.

CUT FROM SHOP FOOTAGE. NO SHOOT.

0:00



Black. A counter bell. “What shop you from?”

0:04



Shop doors open in six cities. Dawn.

0:10



Boxes open. Six checkers, six colours, on the beat.

0:16



Regulars lace up. Heel colour, then the toe: classic.

0:22

SIDEWALK SUPPLY
CURB SERVICE
LEDGE & RAIL
GRIP TAPE CO.

Type card: the shop names, one per beat.

0:27

VANS

PROPERTY OF THE SHOP.

End card. Wordmark small.

Every shot is shop-supplied phone footage graded to one look; frames above are the animatic. Type animates on the beat grid. The only thing Vans makes is the edit.

21 JUNE.
EVERY SHOP, SAME MORNING.

Go Skateboarding Day.

The one day the shops already own. Every kit drops at opening time, local.

No announcement.

Vans posts nothing until the shops have. The first word comes from a counter, not a feed.

The code.

Each shop’s checker is a code its regulars recognise on the street. The ad is other people’s feet.

Local press.

The story is “our shop got its own Vans,” pitched city by city. The shoe is the footnote.



10 / EARNED

THE STORY IS THE SHOP. THE SHOE IS THE FOOTNOTE.

Spokesperson

The shop owner, never a Vans exec. Each founding shop gets a one-page briefing and a photographer for a morning.

The angle

Local first: “Echo Park skate shop gets its own Vans.” Then the pattern story for trade and national: fifty shops, fifty checkers, one day.

The quote

Template the owners rewrite in their own words: “We sold these for twenty years. Now one of them has our name on it.”

The beats

Day 0: shops post. Day 1: local outlets and skate media. Week 1: Vans reposts; trade press runs the pattern. Week 4: the second-wave shops announce themselves.

TWELVE WEEKS TO DROP. ONE YEAR TO PROVE IT.

Weeks 1–3	Weeks 4–8	Weeks 9–11	21 June	Year one
Generator built. 50 founding shops invited, colours chosen.	Kits produced. Walls painted. Shops shoot their own footage.	Film cut. Stickers and signs delivered. Press briefed city by city.	Drop. Shops post first. Vans reposts. Walls revealed.	Shops renew or redesign their checker. Second wave of 200 shops.

Sell-through	Founding shops vs. matched control shops, 90 days post-drop.
Earned	Posts tagged to shops, not the brand; local press mentions per city.
Loyalty	Share of founding shops that renew the kit in year two. That number is the campaign.
Paid for by	The retail co-op budget Vans already spends with big-box partners, redirected. Fifty kits and fifty walls cost less than one national media flight.

THE BRAND GETS SMALLER. THE SHOPS GET BIGGER.

That is the whole trade. Vans gives up the front of the shoe and gets back the thing it can’t buy: a reason for the people who built it to talk about it again.

Scope and notes. Self-initiated spec concept, not commissioned by Vans. No Vans trademarks are reproduced; shop names are fictional. Type, system and layouts are designed; the photographs are generated under art direction and show no real products or premises.

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