



Engaging Men in Inclusive Workplaces

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSE



A practical, evidence-based guide to helping men thrive, communicate, and perform in a diverse and inclusive work culture.

Understand how male gender norms shape behaviour at work and learn clear, evidence-based methods to guide conversations related to gender, shape cultural change, and confidently address discrimination without alienating team members.

Why engaging men?

The way men are socialised can bring both challenges and opportunities at work. We understand this and help you calibrate their strengths so they can thrive and embrace inclusive work environments.

In many modern workplaces, the rules, culture and expectations around communication, inclusion, and professionalism have changed quickly. At the same time, many companies invest in skills and development programs for women, minorities, and underrepresented groups. Some male employees experience the overall shift as unclear, high-stakes, or unfairly framed, leading to defensiveness, confusion, withdrawal, or open resistance.

Managers and HR departments are often asked to implement new guidance while keeping teams focused, motivated, and productive. They are expected to uphold organisational values and

prevent harmful behaviour, while also keeping space open for honest discussion about priorities, performance, and concerns. Many report lacking practical tools for understanding what male team members are struggling to express, and for intervening in ways that reduce tension rather than escalate it. In effect, issues often go underground: problems are dealt with individually rather than collectively, communication becomes brittle, and teams start “walking on eggshells.”

Designed and delivered by an applied ethics expert and lecturer, this course combines virtue ethics, organisational psychology, and skills-based practice to address these challenges. It focuses explicitly on how male gender norms shape men’s behaviour at work, and how traits such as self-sufficiency, toughness, competitiveness, and responsibility can be genuine strengths, but can also limit communication, emotional awareness, and cooperation under pressure. The course equips managers with a clear, non-ideological framework to understand these dynamics and to work with them constructively. Participants learn how to apply a values–virtues–power framework both to their teams and to their own leadership practice, helping men calibrate their strengths, express concerns without defensiveness, and engage productively with change.



Who is this training for

- Mid- to senior-level managers, supervisors, and team leaders responsible for overseeing male-dominated or mixed-gender teams.
- Managers who directly influence workplace culture, decision-making, and team dynamics.
- HR professionals or senior staff supporting management in implementing cultural and structural change.



Particularly useful for participants who:

- Received some prior training on diversity or inclusion but have limited exposure to gender-sensitive leadership and masculinity-focused interventions.
- Are motivated to improve team performance, reduce conflicts, and foster an inclusive environment
- Want to apply insights directly to their teams, influencing behaviors and cultural norms

Addressing the following needs ...

- Clear, evidence-based methods to guide conversations with male employees, addressing defensiveness or resistance towards discussions about gender, diversity, or privilege.
- Capacity to identify subtle or systemic gendered dynamics in teams
- Confidence in addressing discrimination without alienating team members
- Understanding how leadership style impacts team culture
- Tools for monitoring progress and accountability within teams, that can be applied directly to everyday management tasks
- Peer support or role models for managing men and promoting positive change.

... and friction points

- Pressure to meet targets while at the same time focusing on inclusivity and team well-being
- Navigating the impact masculine social norms have on performance or workplace culture
- Resistance or backlash which follows attempts at addressing sensitive topics
- Difficulty implementing cultural change without clear guidelines or amongst conflicting messages and interests
- Lack of actionable strategies to address discriminatory behaviours without creating conflict

Learning outcomes



By the end of the training, participants will be able to:

- Identify how workplace norms and informal practices influence men's behavior, and understand the role of managers in shaping these norms.
- Examine their own leadership style in relation to gender and power dynamics.
- Support men in critically reflecting on their behavior and attitudes without shaming or alienating them.
- Apply ethical and gender-aware decision-making in daily management practices to identify and address discriminatory behaviors in teams.
- Create mechanisms to promote, reinforce and monitor greater awareness of gendered social norms and power dynamics amongst male team members.
- Develop strategies to encourage respectful communication and equitable participation among male team members.
- Serve as visible role models for equality-oriented masculinities.
- Translate awareness into practical HR, project, and performance management strategies.
- Identify opportunities for structural change within teams or departments.

NOTE: the full list applies to the full-day workshop version. Shorter versions are described in the training outline below.

What this training is

- A practical, evidence-informed workshop for managers wishing to build their capacity to understand and address the perspective of male employees constructively and inspire them to thrive in diverse and inclusive teams.
- A space to explore common workplace friction points with confidentiality, respect, and clear facilitation.
- A toolkit for translating values (fairness, respect, excellence, care) into behaviours that improve trust and performance.
- A way to reduce disengagement and "walking on eggshells" dynamics by giving people shared language and scripts.

What this training is not

- Not a debate about politics, ideology, or anyone's identity.
- Not an anti-DEI session and not a space for blaming women, minorities, or colleagues.
- Not therapy and not a place to process personal trauma.
- Not a substitute for HR policy, compliance training, or investigations into misconduct.
- Not a promise that "no one will ever criticise you again".

Format Options

90-minute impulse

Best for:

- first exposure
- internal pilot
- low-commitment entry point

Half-day workshop

Best for:

- teams with friction
- culture change initiatives
- mixed attitudes in the room

Full-day workshop

Best for:

- teams with friction
- company culture disagreements
- high-stakes teams
- deeper behaviour change

Ground Rules

This training is designed to promote psychological safety and respectful dialogue, be constructive, candid, and respectful. We discuss sensitive topics that can trigger strong reactions. To make this useful and safe for everyone, we expect confidentiality, speak from personal experience, and avoid generalisations. Disagreement is welcome; disrespect is not. The facilitator may pause or redirect discussion to keep it productive and ensure everyone can participate without fear of ridicule or retaliation. Participation is encouraged, but participants have the right to pass on any exercise.

An illustrative perspective some participants bring

I am a manager in a corporate or professional environment.

I feel responsible for my team's performance and well-being, and some members of my team feel constrained by company policies on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, which they perceive as abstract, bureaucratic, or in tension with business goals.

I struggle with some team members' resistance, defensiveness, or misunderstanding when addressing gender-sensitive issues. I see behaviours that can be counterproductive or exclusionary, yet I'm unsure how to intervene without creating conflict or being accused of overstepping.

I experience uncertainty and tension that prevent me from fully exercising my leadership, modelling good behaviour, and fostering a productive, inclusive team culture.

My needs are to lead in a way that supports both performance and inclusion, to understand how masculine norms influence team behavior, and to gain practical tools for guiding conversations and shaping behaviors constructively.

To successfully guide my team, I need these insights explained in clear, actionable terms - not as ideology, but as leadership tools I can apply day-to-day.



Training Outline

Introduction

Scenario and discussion of the kinds of struggles involved in managing men through cultural change and what is needed to address them.

Reflection exercise exploring men's emotional and practical struggles. Small groups, then plenary. *Full day: company case discussion*

Men and social roles in a company

Through interactive case studies we explore the formal and informal roles people assume at work, how they come in tension, and how they impact performance and our relations with co-workers.

Being a man as a social role

Men perform maleness like any other social role. We explore the male social role through the idea of a Man-Box, and highlight some male social norms which can support or endanger a productive working environment. We then focus on how norms such as self-sufficiency, stoicism, or dominant competition impact men's capacity to thrive in teams and through change.

Man-Box at work exercise. Provide a list of common implicit rules men feel bound by. Analyse how they can come up in common team settings, leading to conflict. *Full day: deep-dive discussion and role-play*

Virtues, Vices and Finding the Golden Middle

Values are what we want to protect at work (fairness, respect, excellence, care). Virtues are the habits that help us live those values under pressure. Many qualities commonly encouraged in men can be virtuous and real assets at work. But under pressure, they can overshoot and turn vicious.

Introduction to the Man's Compass framework developed by PathForge, an evidence-based model from virtue ethics and behavioural psychology. We identify which traits men rely on most at work and show how managers can help men adjust them so they stay virtuous and effective.

Golden middle exercise. Teams pick a trait (assertiveness, ambition, protectiveness, loyalty), define 'deficiency,' 'excess,' and 'golden middle,'

Strategy exercise. Teams develop a strategy to help team members steer away from the vicious and towards the virtuous expression of that trait.

90-minute

Half-day

Full day



90-minute

Half-day

Full day

Power

We discuss power beyond formal authority and in everyday influence: who gets heard, who gets credit, who is included in networks, whose mistakes are forgiven, and whose feedback shapes decisions.

Power mapping exercise. Map invisible forms of power that operate in teams (voice, attention, access, humour, expertise, gatekeeping information, social exclusion), and how gendered expectations can affect how power is used and perceived.

Power audit exercise. In groups, participants map out power dynamics within their teams and how these dynamics are sustained or changed.



Values, Virtues, and the Power of Managers

We identify the virtues which promote good leadership, helping participants recognise their own power and using it in ways that increase trust, team cohesion, and constructive communication.

Manager's virtues exercise. Identify a power you underuse and one you might overuse. Pick a related trait, define 'deficiency,' 'excess,' and develop a strategy to steer towards the 'golden middle.'



Listening to and Speaking with Men

Many workplace conflicts aren't about what people think, but about how concerns are voiced and how they are received under pressure.

Participants learn strategies to help male employees express their emotions and worries without defensiveness or aggression.

Role-play exercise. Participants apply the framework to realistic scenarios, including situations where they feel attacked or face a hard dilemma. *Full day - extended to include more scenarios.*



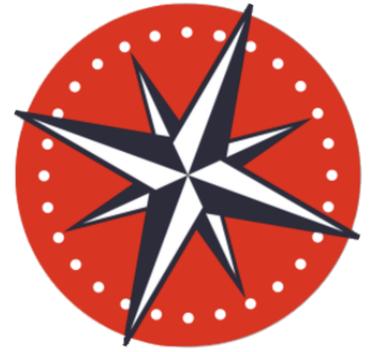
Using masculinity to thrive - together

We discuss strategies to inspire men to play their social role in virtuous ways that create a supportive, inspiring work atmosphere in which everyone can thrive, achieve, and be productive.

Team playbook exercise. In pairs, identify and develop strategies to address one/two/three ways in which male social norms cause frictions in their teams, virtues they see in their team, virtues which need developing further, and potential power misuses to avoid. Pairs support each other's strategy implementation after the workshop.



Evaluation



This training has been developed based on client needs, feedback and suggestions. To ensure high quality and continuous improvement, we employ the following evaluation tools.

Level 1: Immediate pulse (default)

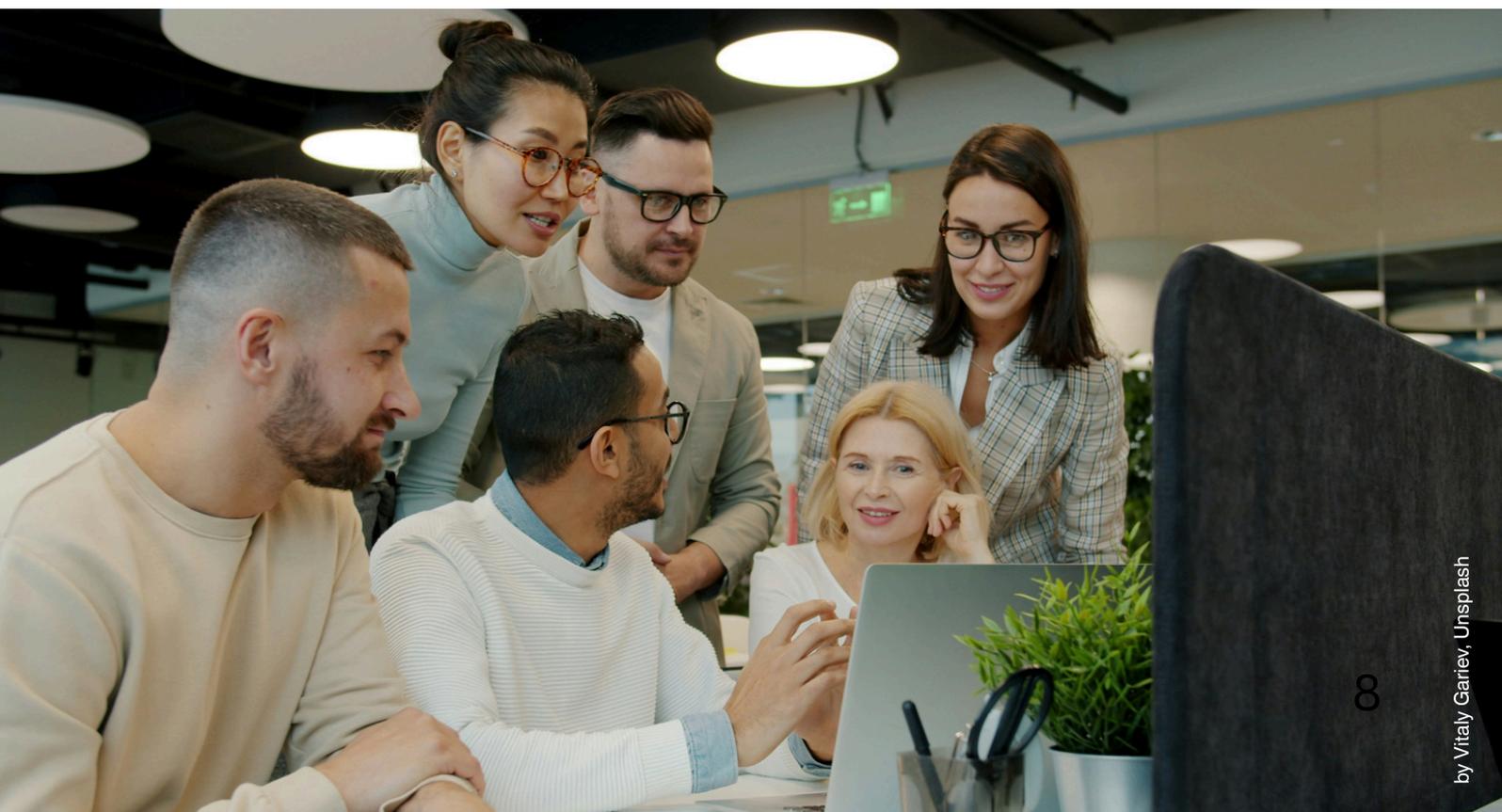
- 3–5 item pre/post survey (2x 3 minutes, anonymous and reported in aggregate)
 - “I feel more confident responding constructively when male team members express frustration, defensiveness, or withdrawal.”
 - “I understand how male norms shape my team’s communication and behaviour.”
 - “I can identify how my own leadership strengths may overshoot under pressure.”
- Post-session qualitative: “One thing I’ll do differently in how I lead or support my team.”

Level 2: Behaviour follow-up (recommended)

- 2–4 week follow-up survey (3 minutes, anonymous and reported in aggregate)
 - “I applied the value/virtue/power framework in a real team situation.”
 - “I used the framework to better understand what a team member was struggling to express.”
 - “I intervened earlier or more constructively in a team tension than I would have before.”
- Manager observation prompt: “What changes have you noticed in team communication? Focus on team-level patterns, not individual tracking; no names; no performance linkage.”

Level 3: Organisational indicators (optional)

- Alignment with existing organisational metrics

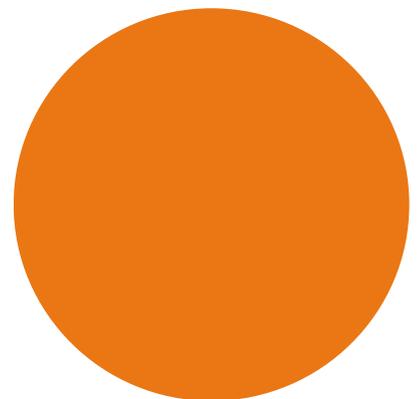
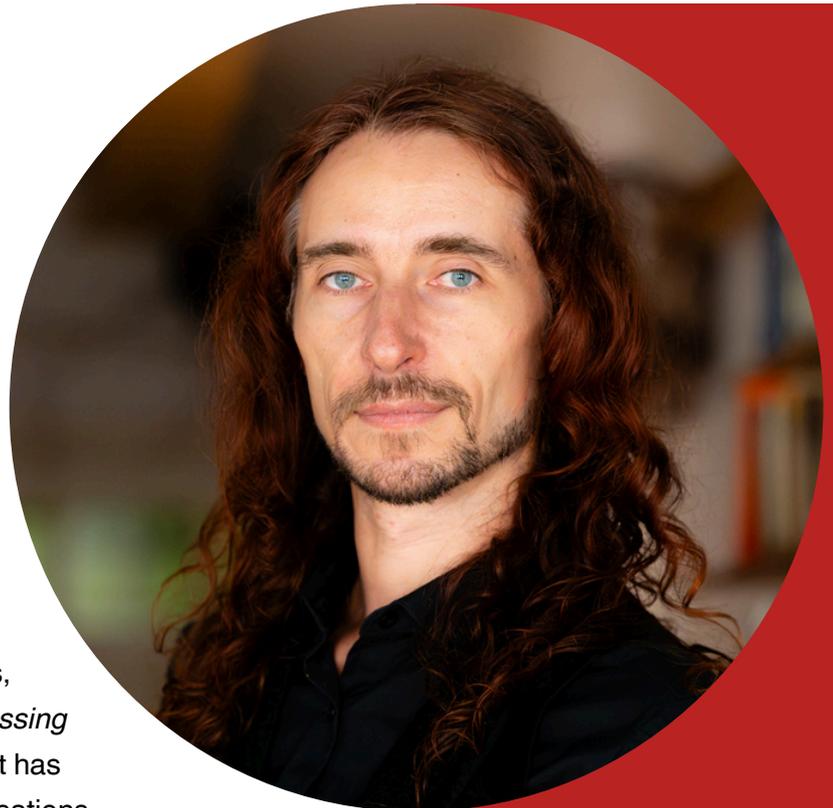


Course leader

Dr Simon Fokt is a philosopher and applied ethics lecturer and educator with extensive experience teaching professional and applied ethics to diverse audiences. His work focuses on translating complex ethical ideas into practical decision-making tools for real organisational contexts, with a particular focus on men and masculinities.

Dr Fokt holds a PhD from the University of St Andrews, has taught at the universities of Edinburgh, Leeds, and HTW Berlin, and delivered training and online courses for corporate clients such as IKEA, LIDL and Deutsche Bahn. He has a strong academic background in ethics, including work on ethical reasoning, intellectual humility, and diversity-related questions, and has been involved in the design and delivery of internationally acclaimed Massive Online Open Courses. He also curates and manages widely used resources in the diversity, ethics and masculinity spaces, such as the *Diversity Reading List* or *Discussing Men*. Alongside his academic work, Dr Fokt has delivered training and consulting for organisations navigating questions of responsibility, fairness, and accountability in complex professional environments.

As a founder and director of PathForge, as well as board member of the European branch of the MenEngage Alliance, Dr Fokt works on questions of masculinities, social roles, and wellbeing, with a particular focus on helping men engage constructively with changing workplace norms. His facilitation style combines intellectual rigour with psychological safety and practical relevance, creating spaces where sensitive topics can be explored productively and without polarisation.



Order Now!

90-minute impulse

- Capacity to recognise and address expressions of male social norms,
- Plan to promote a calibrated behaviour shift focused on developing a virtue.

Base price: 1,200 €

Half-day workshop

- Capacity to recognise and address expressions of male social norms
- Improved ability to engage in gendered discussions with men
- Plan to promote a calibrated behaviour shift
- Peer-accountability strategy.

Base price: 2,000 €

Full-day workshop

- Capacity to recognise, address, and constructively channel expressions of male social norms
- Practiced ability to engage in gendered discussions with men in multiple contexts
- Plan to promote a calibrated behaviour shift
- Plan to develop own powers and virtues to promote team performance and company values.
- Peer-accountability strategy

Base price: 3,500 €

Add-ons and variations:

Office hours: Q&A / case clinic

Train-the-champions: equip internal facilitators to reinforce change

Pulse survey: show impact to sponsors

Divide the workshops: workshops delivered in parts on separate days, with in-between reflection and exercises.

Write us on

contact@path-forge.org

to arrange a free strategy call and start planning your team's future

Available in-person or online

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PathForge is a registered non-profit organisation with a seat in Berlin, Germany.