



Men in Modern Workplaces

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSE

A decorative horizontal bar consisting of two segments: an orange segment on the left and a red segment on the right.

A practical, evidence-based guide to the values and virtues which help men thrive and achieve in fair, inclusive and diverse professional spaces.

Inspiring men to understand the social roles they play and the pressures they feel, talk about them constructively and without defensiveness, and build a work culture based on trust, clarity, and shared standards allowing everyone to succeed.

Why training for men?

The way men are socialised can bring both challenges and opportunities at work. We understand this and help them 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. Some men experience these changes as unclear, hard to talk about, or disconnected from their daily work. Meanwhile, many companies invest in skills and development programs for women, minorities, and underrepresented groups, which some male employees perceive as a lack of support for them.

This training addresses their concerns, offers clarity, support, and inspires greater understanding of changing cultures and ability to navigate inclusive work environments.

Designed and delivered by Dr Simon Fokt, an applied ethics expert and lecturer, and based on the Man's Compass framework developed by PathForge. The training combines virtue-ethical decision tools with organisational psychology and skills practice. It is aimed at men: it recognises and works with the way men are typically socialised and focuses on the challenges and opportunities this brings.

Some strengths typically encouraged in men (drive, responsibility, resilience) are highly valuable in the workplace. This training helps participants keep and develop them while adjusting the 'overdrive' patterns that create conflict, burnout, or disengagement. It offers an evidence-based, practical approach which will inspire men to understand the social role pressures they feel, talk about them constructively and without defensiveness, and build a working culture based on trust, clarity, and shared standards where everyone can thrive. It will further help them fight burnout, stress and unhealthy competition, and support conditions where they and their teams come to work feeling like they belong, are valued, and their work matters. In the end, participants will be better equipped to thrive and let others thrive, and have their masculinity work for them, not against them.



Who is this training for

- Male knowledge workers in medium to large companies, amongst changing company cultures, fairness perceptions, or accountability standards.
- Employees who experience DEI expectations as unclear or inconsistently applied, which can lead to defensiveness, disengagement, and reduced trust.
- Individual Contributors or Teams, with a focus on collaboration, conflict, communication, belonging, team norms, and psychological safety.



Particularly useful for participants who are:

- Technically minded and preferring practical, plain-language frameworks
- Exposed to some past sensitivity/equality training and having mixed opinions of it
- Possibly frustrated with company Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) policies
- Encountered online masculinity/grievance content and seek a constructive alternative

Addressing the following needs ...

- To feel welcome and valued in the company irrespective of gender
- To have clear, consistent expectations of respectful behaviour, that feel achievable
- To be able to express thoughts and criticism in ways which will be considered
- To critically assess male social norms and their impacts on men, women, and everyone on the team
- To gain skills essential to thriving in a modern economy, yet rarely present in male socialisation:
 - Communication – especially in resolving conflict
 - Empathy – with customers and co-workers
 - Humility – willingness to listen to others
 - Agility – capacity to admit to being wrong

... and friction points

- Affinity spaces and perceived exclusion: uncertainty about when spaces or programs are 'for me' and how to engage without overstepping
- Inclusive language: pronouns, terminology, and fear of saying the wrong thing
- Concept words: patriarchy, privilege, feminism (confusion about meaning/implications)
- Sensitive topics: how to talk about harassment or sexism without defensiveness or shutdown

Learning outcomes



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

- Identify the key social roles they occupy at work and how these roles shape trust, conflict, and influence.
- Describe the traditional aspects of the male social role, their impact in knowledge-work settings (performance, status, emotional restraint, competition) and how they can help or hinder teamwork.
- Recognise 2–3 ‘Man Box’ rules they personally follow at work and name the costs and benefits of each.
- Distinguish between intent, impact, and interpretation in workplace communication, especially in high-friction topics.
- Demonstrate a structured script in a role-play to raise concerns about culture or fairness in a way that reduces defensiveness and increases the chance of being heard.
- Apply a values-and-virtues lens (Man’s Compass) to choose responses under pressure that support performance and psychological safety.
- Identify common forms of informal power in teams (voice, credit, access, humour, exclusion) and practise using influence responsibly.
- Create a personal action plan with three specific behaviour changes to improve collaboration, reduce stress, and increase belonging.

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 men in modern workplaces to build constructive communication, self-regulation under pressure, and pro-social leadership.
- 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 knowledge worker in a corporate job, male, middle-aged.

I think that the company's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies are pointless, unfair, and bad for business.

What annoys me is that I feel judged and uncomfortable at work. I don't understand the inclusion rules, perceive them as generating unnecessary problems, and when I try to talk about this I am dismissed or told I'm sexist.

I experience absence of trust and fear of conflict which prevent me from committing to my work, being productive, and being a good team member.

My needs are to not feel attacked and to restore good working atmosphere. To achieve this, I must understand the male social role I play, how it impacts others, how I can play it better, and how to communicate my concerns constructively. I need this explained in plain terms and without 'ideological language'.

To be productive in a sustainable way, I need to learn to embody a kind of masculinity that can benefit the team, help everyone thrive, and be valued.



Training Outline

Introduction

Scenario discussion aimed at showing the kinds of struggles men face 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*

Social roles in a company

Through interactive case studies we will 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.

Role map exercise. Participants list 4 roles they carry and discuss how each affects communication and risk-taking. Then compare role tensions.

Being a man as a social role

Irrespective of biology, Men perform maleness just as much as they perform other social roles. We explore what constitutes the male social role, introduce the idea of a Man-Box, and highlight how some ways of performing masculinity can support a thriving working environment while others can endanger it and disadvantage others.

Man-Box at work exercise. Provide a list of common implicit rules men feel bound by. Each person picks 2 they feel most and notes costs and benefits. *Full day: deep-dive discussion and role-play*

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 what powers they have, and how they use them in ways that impact others.

90-minute

Half-day

Full day



90-minute
Half-day
Full day

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 – drive, protectiveness, toughness, ambition, loyalty, independence – 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 practice adjusting them to the golden middle where they are virtuous and effective.



Golden middle exercise. Teams pick one trait (assertiveness, ambition, protectiveness, loyalty), define 'deficiency,' 'excess,' and 'golden middle,' then identify one real workplace example of each.



Values under pressure exercise. Present 3 short dilemmas (conflict, promotion decision, feedback). Participants choose a value they want to protect and pick a virtue-based response.



How to communicate so you're heard

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



Participants learn a practical structure for raising concerns about team norms, fairness, or performance without aggression or defensiveness.

Role-play exercise. Participants apply the framework to realistic scenarios, including situations where they feel misunderstood, labelled, or reluctant to speak up. *Full day - extended to include more scenarios.*



Using your masculinity to thrive - together

We discuss strategies for using the powers afforded by various social roles virtuously to promote productivity and good workplace relations, as well as become the kind of people who are respected and valued.



Participants are given practical strategies to develop their virtues and use their powers to thrive.

Personal playbook exercise. Each participant sets one/two/three values he wants to promote, virtues he feels confident about and can share with others, virtues he wishes to develop further, and potential power misuses he wants to avoid. Participants form pairs or groups in which they can support each other's development 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 confident raising sensitive concerns constructively.”
 - “I have a practical script I can use for difficult conversations.”
 - “I understand how my ‘strengths under pressure’ can overshoot.”
 - “I feel more able to contribute to a respectful team culture.”
- Post-session qualitative: “One thing I’ll do differently.”

Level 2: Behaviour follow-up (recommended)

- 2–4 week follow-up survey (3 minutes, anonymous and reported in aggregate)
 - “I used the framework at least once.”
 - “The conversation outcome was better than it would have been.”
 - “I noticed reduced avoidance / better feedback.”
- 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

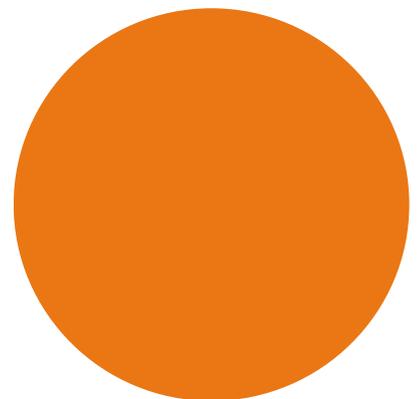


Course leader

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 male social norms in self and others
- Calibrated behaviour shift to develop a virtue and avoid power misuse.

Base price: 1,200 €

Half-day workshop

- Capacity to recognise and address male social norms in self and others
- Calibrated behaviour shift to develop a virtue and avoid power misuse.
- Strategy to raise concerns constructively
- A peer-accountability strategy

Base price: 2,000 €

Full-day workshop

- Capacity to recognise and address male social norms in self and others
- Calibrated behaviour shift to develop a virtue and avoid power misuse.
- Practiced strategy to raise concerns constructively
- Understanding of power dynamics and capacity to use own power and virtues to promote company values
- A 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.