

Calling men in

A positive narratives approach to DEI and leadership

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSE

Help men and other team members feel valued, motivated, and empowered to contribute to a fair, high-performing workplace.

A practical, evidence-based programme to strengthen morale, improve conflict resolution, and implement DEI strategies that bring men on board.

Why positive narratives?

Men's engagement in DEI often falters when initiatives feel abstract or irrelevant. Harnessing Positive Narratives can turn resistance into commitment and unlock team potential.

Most organisations recognise that meaningful progress on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) depends not only on policy and compliance, but on engagement, understanding, and shared purpose across all employees. Still, many managers report that male team members (and others) sometimes respond to DEI initiatives with defensiveness, confusion, or disengagement. Approaches that emphasise critique can unintentionally reinforce these reactions, leading to communication barriers, reduced morale, and fractured team dynamics.

This training addresses that challenge directly. Based on PathForge's research-based frame-

work centring Positive Narratives, it shows leaders how to craft narratives that make inclusive workplaces feel meaningful, energising and connected to the aspirations of all employees, including men.

Positive narratives are not slogans or surface-level messaging. They use the psychological framing effect and recognise the root causes of resistance, to appeal to what people genuinely seek: purpose, belonging, and a vision of success that includes them. By helping leaders shape stories that align organisational values with what motivates their teams, this training equips you to:

- Navigate sensitive conversations about gender, inclusion and change without alienating key contributors
- Translate DEI principles into practical leadership behaviours that improve psychological safety and performance
- Strengthen team cohesion and resilience by making the case for inclusion through narratives that resonate personally and professionally

Ultimately, this training shows leaders how to inspire male team members to embrace inclusive work cultures and help them see themselves as part of the positive future you are building.





Who is this training for

- Mid- to senior-level managers, supervisors, and team leaders seeking to engage male team members (and others) in DEI initiatives.
- HR, OD, and DEI professionals responsible for implementing inclusion strategies that work.
- Executives aiming to strengthen team performance, cohesion, and culture through inclusive leadership.



Participants will learn to

- **Assess men's positions and engage appropriately.** Apply three strategies to engage men across different levels of openness to change using the spectrum of support.
- **Spot and deconstruct narratives.** Analyse how organizational communications implicitly use narratives, from newsletters through team building activities to policy updates.
- **Prevent defensiveness and disengagement.** Identify three factors which drive resistance to DEI and apply strategies to address them.
- **Use positive reinforcement intentionally.** Apply principles of learning theory and persuasion to design and present three strategies that use purpose, belonging, recognition, or growth as motivators.
- **Craft relatable and authentic DEI messages.** Practice three techniques to engage men emotionally and connect inclusive behaviours to outcomes they personally care about.
- **Inspire action step by step.** Design a progressive change pathway using the ladder approach, guiding men from simple first steps to deeper understanding.
- **Address real problems.** Identify three workplace or personal challenges men encounter (e.g., leadership pressure, work-life balance, stress) and propose concrete DEI interventions that address these challenges.
- **Apply in context.** Adapt narratives to diverse audiences, settings, and communication channels, ensuring cultural, generational, and professional relevance.
- **Use all of the above to deliver three narrative-based interventions with specific application contexts that guide men toward inclusive behaviours.**

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

Training Outline

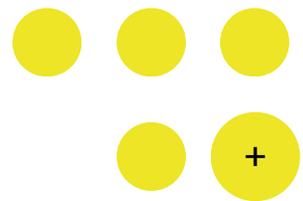
90-minute
Half-day
Full day

Introduction

Scenario and discussion of the kinds of struggles involved in engaging men in cultural change depending on where they are on the spectrum of support.

Reflection exercise exploring men's emotional and practical struggles.

Small groups, then plenary. *Full day: company case discussion*



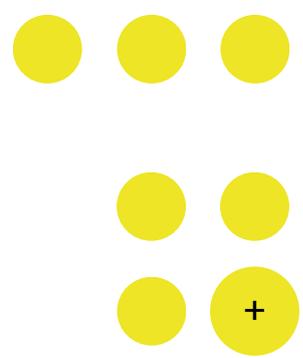
What is a narrative

Through interactive case studies we explore the features of narratives, how they are impacted by framing, and how they show up explicitly or implicitly in specific stories, communications, and messages.

Narratives in your company. We use specific examples of your company communications to identify the kinds of narratives they use.

Narrative reconstruction exercise. Identify specific features of identified narratives which can be changed and consider the impact of such changes.

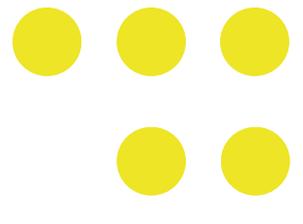
Full day: deep-dive discussion and role-play



Aims and scope

Change doesn't happen overnight and people mostly accept new attitudes when challenged within the zone of proximal development.

The ladder exercise. Identify different groups on the spectrum of support and consider how the narratives identified before impact them. Adjust narratives to audiences in ways that help them take the next step.



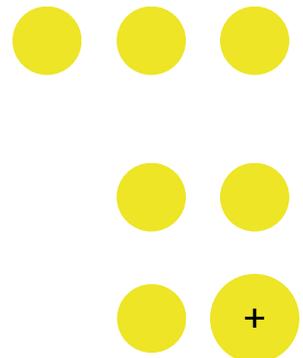
Using positive reinforcement effectively

Review learnings from psychology of persuasion and learning theory to understand the role of 'carrots' and 'sticks' in inspiring long-term behaviour change and navigating defensiveness and disengagement.

What should work but doesn't. In group discussion, identify three factors which drive resistance to DEI with direct reference to company practice.

Practice what works. Teams pick a motivating factor (purpose, belonging, recognition, or growth), and explore ways to frame narratives around them.

Full day: explore motivation through role play.



90-minute
Half-day
Full day

What makes a narrative positive

Participants learn 8 guiding principles helping them design narratives which have a high potential to engage men.

Addressing real problems. Groups identify workplace or personal challenges specific to men and consider how they can be addressed through narratives.

Engaging emotionally. Men are socialised to not show emotion, but they most certainly have them - and responding to them is key to creating engagement.

Inspiring through authenticity. Engaging DEI messages must feel relatable. Practice three techniques to connect inclusive behaviours to outcomes men personally care about.

Contextualising narratives

Adjusting narratives to different audiences, settings, and communication channels to ensure cultural, generational, and professional relevance.

Contextualisation exercise. Identify three specific contexts in the organisation and consider how to adjust narratives to them.

Narrative design workshop

Participants discuss how to apply the previous learnings to design one (90-minutes or half-day) or three (full day) strategies and narrative-based interventions which avoid resistance and use positive framing to inspire understanding and uptake.

Target it well. In groups, develop a strategy to tailor the narrative(s) to engage men across different levels of openness to change using the spectrum of support, identifying the next steps available to them.

Make it positive. Adjust the narrative(s) to use purpose, belonging, recognition, or growth as motivators; address the target group's problems; and engage on an emotional level.

Make it relatable. Analyse the constructed narrative(s) with respect to how authentic and relatable they sound, and adjust as necessary.

Contextualise. Adjust the narrative(s) to the contexts identified previously, ensuring that they remain relevant.

| | 90-minute | Half-day | Full day |
|---------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|
| What makes a narrative positive | ● | ● | ● |
| Addressing real problems. | ● | ● | ● |
| Engaging emotionally. | ● | ● | ● |
| Inspiring through authenticity. | | ● | ● |
| Contextualising narratives | | ● | ● |
| Contextualisation exercise. | | | ● |
| Narrative design workshop | ● | ● | + |
| Target it well. | | ● | + |
| Make it positive. | | ● | + |
| Make it relatable. | | ● | + |
| Contextualise. | | | + |

Format Options

90-minute impulse

Best for:

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

Participants gain:

- A capacity to recognise, construct, and target narratives
- An understanding of positive reinforcement strategies
- One strategy to develop a narrative-based intervention

Base price: 1,200 €

Participants gain:

- A capacity to recognise, construct, and target narratives practiced on company-specific content
- A practiced ability to use positive reinforcement effectively
- Techniques to make narratives relatable and contextualised
- One developed narrative-based intervention which is well-targeted, positive and relatable

Base price: 2,000 €

Half-day workshop

Best for:

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

Participants gain:

- A capacity to recognise, construct, and target narratives practiced and tested on company-specific content
- A practiced ability to use positive reinforcement effectively
- Practiced strategies to make narratives relatable and context-specific
- Three developed narrative-based intervention which are well-targeted, positive, relatable, and context-specific
- A rehearsed ability to design better narratives in the future

Base price: 3,500 €

Full-day workshop

Best for:

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

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.

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.

Order Now!

Start planning your team's future
Write contact@path-forge.org
for a free strategy call

90-minute impulse

- Recognise, construct & target narratives
- Use positive reinforcement effectively
- One strategy to develop an intervention

Base price: 1,200 €

Half-day workshop

- Recognise, construct, and target narratives practiced on company-specific content
- Practiced ability to use positive reinforcement effectively
- Make narratives relatable and contextualised
- One developed narrative-based intervention which is well-targeted, positive and relatable

Base price: 2,000 €

Full-day workshop

- Recognise, construct, and target narratives practiced and tested on company-specific content
- Practiced ability to use positive reinforcement effectively
- Practiced strategies to make narratives relatable and context-specific
- Three developed narrative-based intervention which are well-targeted, positive, relatable, and context-specific
- Rehearsed ability to design narratives in the future

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.

Available
in-person
or online

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PathForge is a
registered non-profit
organisation with a seat
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