

The ManForge Manifesto

Made by Men. With Men. For Men.

I was told that this manifesto would give a better understanding of the who, the what, and the why ManForge Enterprises does what it does. And even though you'll hear throughout this entire manifesto about men and forging men, it's not to leave women out.

I believe women should be celebrated. They're told on a constant, consistent basis that they're not enough — not skinny enough, not pretty enough, not smart enough, not sexy enough. That's all bullshit. The reason masculinity's got such a bad name today isn't because of women — it's because there aren't enough men giving a true representation of what a man is supposed to be.

I believe in equal pay. I believe in standing beside women where it makes sense. But I also know women have been told they have to kiss a lot of toads to find a prince. And when a rat comes along and tells her he's Prince Charming, she's liable to believe it if she's never seen a king.

But when a woman's had the blessing of spending time with a king, she's been given the greatest gift there is the measuring stick to which all men must measure up. A king gives that to her through his actions. Because a true king doesn't just talk — he raises Prince Charming. So, if that rat doesn't treat her at least as well as the king has, she'll know he's not worth her time.

And for the record, I open doors for women — not because they can't open them themselves. I open doors for women because they shouldn't have to.

This isn't about leaving the ladies out. One of the hopes that drives this is that men will become better men. Better fathers. Better husbands. Better friends. That we give each other a place to be real — without judgment, without labels, without shame. Because all of us need each other.

The Question That Marked the Beginning

It all began with a simple question: "Teddy, what makes you truly happy?"

For most folks, that might be easy. But I didn't want to spit out some Sunday school answer like "rainbows, burritos, and strippers." I sat with it. Rolled it around in my head for hours. And the truth was — I couldn't answer it.

Around that same time, I was wrestling with the idea of God or a higher power. I had come to understand the need to admit that there had to be something greater than me — because if the world had to rely on my strength alone, we'd all be in trouble.

I didn't have a polished definition, but I had a hunger to find my own. Eckhart Tolle says the human ego is the only thing arrogant enough to try to copyright a word as magnificent as "God." I believe him. And like a good Texan, I might not be able to tell you what makes me happy or what God looks like — but I damn sure can tell you what they aren't.

That realization flipped the lights on. It marked the beginning of the path I've been walking ever since.

Mentorship

The next pivotal moment came through mentorship. When I was about 25 (maybe 30), I met the man who would become my first real business mentor. He was about 15 years my senior, sharp as a whip.

He sat in my office one day and asked me what my weaknesses were. Cocky young me said paperwork, but not to worry, I was "working on it." He looked me dead in the eye and said, "No, you're not. You can work on your weaknesses from now until the day you die, and the best you'll ever be is ordinary. But if you spend that time building your strengths and delegate your weaknesses to someone else's strengths, you'll be extraordinary.

That moment was a cornerstone. It taught me the value of mentors — men who have what I want and will hold me accountable. Since that day, I've always had a mentor. Always.

And it became the foundation of how I'd run every business after. Not as a top-down triangle where the man on top gets served, but an inverted triangle, where the greatest among us are the greatest servants. Leadership looks like service. Flip the triangle, and suddenly you build something that lasts.

The Moment That Changed Everything

Once I accepted that the problem was mine and mine alone, the real work began. That's when I learned one of the most powerful tools I've ever used: the power of the pause.

In the middle of something spinning out, the first step is acceptance—it's happening. The second is recognizing that I can't control it. So I take a couple of steps back, breathe, and let that pause create a sliver of space between what's happening and how I choose to handle it.

That's when I turn the diamond. If I look at something only through my own lens, it's warped by my experiences, fears, and habits. But if I shift my perspective—turn that diamond just an eighth of an inch—I start to see it from the other person's side. That small turn changes everything.

Here's the truth: if something happens and I react in the moment, that reaction is going to come straight out of my character defects—every single time. Not sometimes, not usually—every time. It'll come out as fear, anger, ego, pride, or some other bastardized instinct. But if I take that pause, find the fear driving the defect, and let my brain cool off, then I can respond instead. And when I respond, I respond out of the virtues that were originally given to me, not the corrupted versions I built over time.

For years, I kept that list of 88 defects and their opposite virtues in my truck, in every vehicle I owned. One side listed the defect, the other side listed the virtue. It reminded me daily: if I'm acting out, I'm living in the defect. If I want to change it, I've got to trace it back to the fear hiding behind that reaction, name it, and then apply the virtue. That's the work.

That's how my living changed the way that I think.

The Operating Code

All of this means nothing if it doesn't translate into how I live.

This is the code that came out of the fire:

1. We Forge Men, Not Products

ManForge isn't built to crank out gimmicks or polished masks. It's built to forge better men. Every tool, every conversation, every story, every system points to that single North Star.

2. We Manage Processes, We Coach People

Systems create structure. Processes create clarity. Leadership means coaching men, not micromanaging them.

3. Double Down on Strengths

Stop sanding down every rough edge. Build around what you do best. Delegate your weaknesses to someone else's strengths.

4. Face the Fear, Then Do the Work

Finding fear isn't the finish line—it's the start. Real growth happens when you stop reacting and start responding.

5. Control Only What's Yours

You don't control people, places, things, or situations. The only thing you control is what happens inside your circle. Respond, don't react. Acceptance is freedom.

6. Truth Over Performance

Real, uncomfortable, gut-punch honesty is the foundation. You can't build anything real on pretending.

7. Serve the Next Man Up

Greatness isn't standing on someone else's back—it's lifting the man next to you. In this forge, leadership looks like service. Flip the triangle.

8. Progress Over Perfection

Perfection is a mirage. Progress is real. Be a little better today than you were yesterday.

9. Intentions Don't Build Legacies — Actions Do

Most men judge themselves by their intentions. The world doesn't. It only sees what you do.

I wrestled with "faith without works is dead" until someone told me:

"Willingness without action is a fantasy."

I can sit on the couch and say I'm willing to be the best guitar player in the world, but until I pick it up and play, that willingness is worthless. Talk is cheap. The forge shapes men through work.

10. I Don't Stand Alone

None of this would've happened without my relationship with a power greater than myself. Call it God, Being, the Divine—I don't care what you call it.

For years, I called Him "Cliff," because I didn't know what else to call Him. He didn't care what I called Him—only that I was calling.

That relationship is the quiet backbone behind every lesson

I've learned, every mountain I've climbed, every fire I've walked through.

You don't have to share my faith. But you will hit a wall your strength can't break. When that day comes, you'd better have something bigger than you to lean on. I did. I still do.

Closing

If you're reading this, I appreciate your time. If somehow, some way you don't agree with anything written here, then either read it again... or toss it. Because I've learned that things come into my life in seasons. Some stay a short time, some I have to revisit, and some I just miss altogether.

But if you're here, and some of this resonates — even a little — my challenge to you is: why not? What can it hurt? Unless your ego's convinced you that you've already got it all figured out. If that's the case, throw it away. Worst case, I've wasted ten minutes of your time.

But if you've read this far and stuck with me, then I challenge you: come be a part of something bigger than yourself. Something that cares more about the man next to you than itself.

We don't judge each other. We listen. Sometimes we listen without fixing a damn thing. Because deep down, most men feel like nobody wants to hear what we think or how we feel. We've been taught to keep it quiet.

But we know the cavalry isn't coming. Nobody's riding in to save us. The cavalry is within us. History's full of proof: great men aren't born — they're forged.

As I look back and feel my ancestors pushing me forward, I choose not to stop. I choose to be a better man today than I was yesterday. I understand that if it's going to happen, it's going to be me that makes it happen.

Like Colonel William Travis at the Alamo, surrounded by thousands with just 125 men, he drew a line in the sand and gave them a choice. If you want to leave, leave. But if you want to stay and fight, step across the line.

So, I'll ask you the same: Is this that line for your life, right now, in this moment?

If it is... welcome, brother. We're damn glad you're here.