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MAJOR CANDADE, DIRECTOR, WILDERTRAILS

training, emphasizes Ajeet Bajaj, managing director, Snow Leopard Adventures. Indoor simulations may allow use of intellect and words as defense. The outward bound methodology ensures that all individuals participate in activities and allows many real experiences for reviewing and to deriving learning. "More than that, in outdoor training, the impact of each decision that a participant takes is immediate and directly relates to the success of the team," he goes on to say.

Contrary to opinion, these uniquely designed adventure activities do not require any previous experience or special physical fitness. Although the activities do stretch the participants a little they do not push them too far. So if fitness is not on the agenda, what is it? "Outbound programs work on the principle that when a team is thrown together in wilderness, where they have to fend for themselves and meet challenges together, there is growth in many directions," shares Major Candade, director, Wildertrails Adventure Camp. One of these is the opportunity for participants to bond with each other in the face of adversity.

Work or just play?

There is a danger of getting trapped by fly-by-night outbound tour operators, who lack professional expertise in behavioral learning solutions, and promote fun and games as an end in themselves. Where does one draw the line?

It seems that whether outbound is work or play depends on the objective of the

program, the quality and experience of the process trainers and the presence or absence of reflective process sessions that follow activity sessions, and the duration of the program. Says Major Candade, "Shorter one day and two day programs offer fun with some amount of learning, but longer programs are more effective in addressing specific objectives with long-term results."

Capt. S. Ravi, CEO, Pegasus Institute for Excellence believes that learning is directly proportional to the amount of fun you have, so fun is an integral part of all the programs. "The activities provide the platform to generate data for the participants to reflect upon and understand for themselves their natural reactions as

opposed to doctored responses to situations. While the activities are played so that the participants have fun, the reflection processes that follow are work," he avers. A delicate balance between playful events and facilitative work processes leaves the right impact.

Perfectly planned, perfectly executed

Increasingly, outbound learning is being perceived as a serious learning initiative, rather than an aimless series of games that ends up nowhere. Which is why today organizations seek very clear and measurable deliverables from these programs, mostly in the form of solid action plans, employee satisfaction scores or follow-up activities. The success of the outbound program is not measured by the extent of thrill it provides but by its relevance back in the office and whether the learnings are actionable.

"When experienced facilitators observe behavioral nuances of participants and provide the right kind of feedback, it creates insights for the group, making them powerful learning experiences."

V.J.RAO, GROUP VP, LEARNING, TMTCL