Outdoor Management Training (OMT) A Pragmatic Approach For Leadership Development

S. Boopathy
Associate Professor, Dr. N.G.P Institute of Technology
Coimbatore - 641 048

ABSTRACT

Outdoor Management Training (OMT) is becoming popular among corporate and. Business schools. It is because of the fact that this type of training offers ample learning, enhances one’s skill and attitude to great extent. This type of training is very well accepted and is being practiced in western countries and it is gaining momentum in India as well. This training takes its idea from experiential learning approach, where one will learn from his own experience. It is believed that this type of training programmes will offer plenty of intangible benefits to the participants, which even a formal classroom setting or any traditional training cannot offer. The purpose of this article is to create awareness and encourage the educational institutions and corporates to experiment and experience this type programme to realize the real benefits of this training for the development of their organization.

Key words: Outdoor Management Training (OMT), Experiential Learning, Outdoor Management games, Obstacle course, Soft adventurous activities

INTRODUCTION

Today there is a growing interest for Outdoor Management Training (OMT) programmes among B-Schools and Corporate community. This is because of the fact that this type of programmes are considered as relevant and useful for management students, corporate managers and executives. This type of training programmes are based on the applications of experiential learning approach, where one will learn from his/her own experience. There is a conviction that, this type of training will offer plenty of intangible benefits to the participants, which even a formal classroom setting or any other traditional training environ cannot offer. When these training programmes are meticulously planned and properly executed by outdoor trainers, this will help the participants to acquire multiple skills like leadership, decision making, problem solving etc., to a great extent. Further, this training provides opportunity for ample learning to the participants through adequate briefing, debriefing and performance review sessions with the facilitators which in turn will enable the participants to discover their hidden talents. In literature different names are synonymously used for this type of training programme by the service providers and researchers in different countries. Here are a few names mentioned for the same; they are Outdoor based training, Outbound training, Outward Bound training, Outdoor Management Development, Outdoor Based Experiential Training etc.. The reason for different names is because this training takes its idea from four different broad fields of education namely outdoor, adventure experiential and management. This training is offered to B-school students as Outdoor Management Training and for corporate executives Outdoor Management Development programmes but ultimately both aims at developing leadership skills among their participants.

A GLIMPSE OF OUTDOOR MANAGEMENT TRAINING

In OMT wide range of activities are conducted in outdoors for the benefit of participants by outdoor trainers. Generally this type of training is organized in a scenic outdoor setting or in a camp site, even in resorts exclusively designed or planned for this purpose. The trainers are professionals
coming from different backgrounds and they act as facilitators and bring about positive change in the attitude and behavior of the participants through their rich knowledge, training approach and experience.

Usually OMT team comprises of qualified and experienced management professors or academicians, outdoor trainers, adventure experts and psychologists. In this training each facilitator will certainly have a role to play and the participants are motivated to participate in all the outdoor activities by their facilitators and significance of each activity to their personal and professional life situations will be explained to the participants.

The activities in OMT include wide range of Outdoor Management, team building, creativity and fun games, Obstacle or Challenge courses, Soft Adventure activities are also being conducted. In this training, all the activities are offered with an objective to enhance their leadership and managerial skills.

Outdoor management games will help the participants to experience and understand many management concepts like group dynamics, teambuilding, importance of teamwork, team synergy and helps them to overcome group conflict. Obstacle or challenge courses will expose the participants to manage difficult situations and challenges faced by them and enable them to overcome the same, which will be very relevant to their real life situation. Through soft adventurous activities they can develop self confidence, risk taking ability and can even discover their true potential.

**OMT TRIANGLE**

![OMT Triangle Diagram](image)

From the above OMT triangle it is obvious that more emphasis is given for outdoor management games and activities. Outdoor management games are exciting events which involves lot of fun, frolic and rich learning experience to the participants, with respect to their management domain. Outdoor activities like trekking, hiking, camping and visiting some archeological significant places etc., which enhances socialization, trust and team building and bonding among team members. Obstacle courses are designed to experiment challenging situations to the participants, they are made to overcome many obstacles as individuals and teams, to learn importance of accepting challenges, to realize the need for teamwork, synergy, co-operation and co-ordination. In soft adventurous activities the participants are encouraged to take calculated risk to realize themselves, develop their self confidence and self esteem by participating in such tasks.
On the whole all these activities will contribute for individual as well as team development. Moreover, OMT acts as a platform for the participants to improve their interpersonal relationship with others and it is a classical example for “activity based learning” for the participants, where learning or training happens in an interesting and amusing way. Whatever the participants learn during the training will sure have an impact on their professional and personal life. The success of this training is determined by the following factors viz., the safety, quality training offered, knowledge, skill and experience of the trainers, above all cooperation and support extended by participants during the training programme.

**Few Sample Photographs of Outdoor Management Training (OMT)**

![Exhibit 1: Icebreaking session](image1.png)

![Exhibit 2: Students Participating in Obstacle activities](image2.png)

![Exhibit 3: Team Building Activities](image3.png)

![Exhibit 4: Soft Adventure Activities](image4.png)

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

By now adequate research have been carried in this field in western countries, but only a little research have been conducted in this field in our country and that prompted the author to write an article in this topic. Here few literature pertaining to Outdoor management training is given below for justification and better understanding.
Chapman, C.A. Lumsdon, (1983) "Outdoor Development Training: A New Tool for Management", How two business school lecturers used outdoor activities as an aid to management development. Their findings show that physically and psychologically demanding tasks can make a significant contribution to management learning.

MacLean, Robert Paton, Elaine de Vries (1996) they describe the use of outdoor management development exercises in relation to the issue of personal competences. Presents findings of a pilot study by the University of Glasgow Business School, which is researching the relationship between traditional and vocational models of learning. Finds that in general, there are potential personal benefits for participants to explore their managerial skills through outdoor development exercises.

Glenn M. McEvoy, Paul F. Buller, (1997) states that outdoor management development (OMD) is on the increase. Based on personal experience, he lists out the characteristics of effective OMD programmes, and he argues that this type of training can be very powerful. On the basis of a review of relevant literature and anecdotal evidence, discusses ten salient features of OMD that account for this power: emotional intensity; psychological safety; consequentiality; enhanced self-confidence; use of metaphors; unpredictability; experiencing peak performance; multiple skill/knowledge types; developing the whole person; and focus on transfer.

CONCLUSION:

This type of training is an interdisciplinary approach it requires highly qualified and experienced trainers or facilitators from diverse backgrounds to impart leadership skills to the participants. Therefore it is concluded from the above discussion that this training will provide adequate opportunities for the participants to discover the leader in them.

REFERENCES: