



# Empowering Times

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Dear Reader,

Mother Nature is a great teacher and when it comes to improving managerial skills, learning in the outdoors proves to be a medium nothing can match. **Jay**, who has extensively facilitated workshops in the outdoors, writes in the **Thinking Aloud** column about the possibilities of learning from any kind of landscape - desert, mountain or the sea!

On the **Podium**, **Anuraaga Chandra**, Regional Vice President (Sales) for Asia Pacific Australia (APA) region at Danfoss, passionately shares why he believes in learning in the outdoors. He also shares how learning experiences from the outdoors continue to inspire his team long after they experienced it.

In **Between The Lines**, we recommend 'Beyond the Summit' by Todd Skinner, a free climber, who distilled lessons from his mountain climbing experiences. His mountains were real, but we all have our own metaphorical mountains to climb.

Talking about heights, Vikram Nandwani's Toons are scaling new heights on the popularity charts. Recently, his caricature 'Bhatku' from the Verry India! series bagged the runners-up award on the Just Toon it! contest. To see the refreshing Toons, simply click on [www.verryindia.com](http://www.verryindia.com)

We are witnessing an overwhelming interest from our readers on how they can contribute articles to Empowering Times. We thank you and welcome your contributions; just drop a mail to us to know how you can write for Empowering Times.

To see any of the previous issues, simply [click here](#) or visit the '[Media and Archives](#)' section on our website.

Geetanjali Sharma  
Editor, Empowering Times

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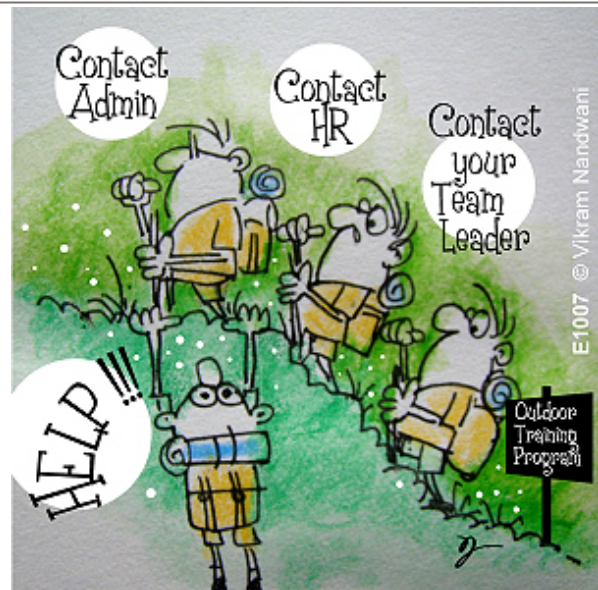
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## THINKING ALOUD



**'In 2007, we facilitated India's first leadership expedition when a small group of top managers overcame personal adversity to summit the snow-clad peak of Mount Kilimanjaro.'**

## The Best Business School? - Jay

Where are the best lessons of life learned? Is it in a classroom or is it in the school of hard-knocks? While there are advocates for both schools, I believe that each have their role to play in our learning. This is not only for life in general, but also for learning & development in the Corporate world.

Harold Geneen, President of ITT Corporation, and considered by many to be the father of the modern multinational conglomerate, said that, 'Leadership cannot really be taught. It can only be learned.' Over the years while a lot of work that we do at Empowered Learning has been within the four walls of a Learning Centre, I find that learning in the outdoors has stood out as a significant event in many individual's life. Is it because they have fun or does the outdoors truly unfetter their minds and makes them explore vistas that they have dreamt of but never reached out for? Well, once again, truly the answer lies in both. Without having fun we do not learn, but an overdose of fun dilutes the purpose of learning in the outdoors, as it is distinct from a picnic or a mere walk in the woods.

While I have been privileged to be associated with various kinds of learning events, at Empowered Learning we have specialized in designing sessions for senior management. Top management is wonderful at expounding concepts: give them a powerpoint presentation & they will tell you how to run the world! But put them in a situation which is new or has risky challenges and requires personal skin-in-the-game, then you see what the true mettle of the man/woman is!

Also, as we all know, teams are built over a period of time. The outdoors enables us to provide a simulated environment of high pressure, challenges, adversity, 'safe' failure and potential achievement. Therefore, within a short period, emotions get heightened and the result is flashes of learning, which if properly harnessed in the hands of a good facilitator, can be very useful at the work place. Over the years, I have heard transformational stories of teams and individuals because of the power of learning in the outdoors.

The themes we have explored include Leadership Development, Building Teams, Teaming Skills, Expanding Personal Dimensions, Negotiations, Risk Taking, etc. Further, the locations of our workshops have been varied: from the magnificent Ganges to the pristine and majestic mountains of Sikkim, from the lush green hills of Himachal in northern India to the blue Nilgiri Mountains in south India, from the Himalayan desert in the sky (Ladakh) to the glorious deserts of Rajasthan and from the giant waves of the Arabian Sea to working with horses. Truly, our country offers so many landscape options to those hungry for adventure, and we share the excitement of our clients who wish to explore them. Besides, we have also crafted our sessions overseas (in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, etc.).

While there is some interesting literature available on this subject, I would like to highlight what Jim Collins (the celebrated author of tomes like 'Good to Great' and 'Built to Last') has often said on what rock climbing - his passion - has taught him: 'Climbing teaches that the biggest barriers are not on the rock, but in our minds'. Collins, a great advocate of learning from the outdoors, has often used the metaphor of the mountains to illustrate the Big Hairy Audacious Goals (BHAGs) that organizations set for themselves. The 'expedition' to achieve these business goals involves learning not just business lessons but also messages for life in various ways, including the power of collaboration. Collins has noted in his research that, 'I learned that the highest individual achievements are never solo events, that you only reach your best with the help of other people, and their belief in you. It's a lesson I will never forget, no matter what I do with the rest of my life.'

I believe that leadership at the cutting edge is life itself. We have advocated this philosophy and have endeavoured to encapsulate it in our learning sessions. In 2007, we facilitated India's first leadership expedition when a small group of top managers overcame personal adversity to summit the snow-clad peak of Mount Kilimanjaro (the highest point in Africa). The joy of achievement in summiting 19,340 feet at 7 a.m. in the morning on the 15th August 2007 (coinciding with India's 60th Independence anniversary) is unparalleled in our lives, bringing new meaning to what I had read before from Sir Edmund Hillary that 'It's not the mountain we conquer but ourselves'. Similarly, we also facilitated India's first leadership expedition on the high seas in February 2010 where a corporate team from Danfoss sailed for 3 days in the Arabian sea as part of a leadership workshop.

Want to know more? Reach out to us & come join us in the glorious adventure called the World of Business!

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## PODIUM



### INTERVIEW: Anuraaga Chandra on Learning in the Outdoors

*Anuraaga Chandra, is the Regional Vice President (Sales) for APA region for Refrigeration & Air-conditioning products at Danfoss, a Danish multinational.*

*Anuraaga joined Danfoss in the year 2004 and has held several leadership positions. Prior to Danfoss, he had a successful career with Blue Star Ltd. where he handled many senior managerial roles. He holds a degree in Mechanical Engineering from University of Mysore, Karnataka.*

*His passion for outdoor activities is a defining characteristic of his nature. He has an innate pull towards adventure and risk. He is a staunch supporter of 'Learning in the Outdoors' and has extensively made use of it to achieve his business strategies that ultimately brought him the desired results.*

When it comes to talking about Learning in the Outdoors, the space on the **Podium** is reserved for Anuraaga. An Empowering Times exclusive, he talks about how the great outdoors can develop a 'can do' attitude and motivate the team to take on any challenges in life or at work. His passion for outdoors is infectious. Read on to know more...

**ET: What is Learning in the Outdoors all about?**

**AC:** Learning in the outdoors is about self-realization. In a natural environment, the mind is at ease. The relaxed atmosphere helps us to shed our inhibitions and hesitations. We uncover the true-self in us. Being with nature brings out our natural way of working which improves our personal effectiveness and in turn organisational effectiveness.

**ET: How do you decide when to conduct an outdoor learning program?**

**AC:** At Danfoss, we found Learning in the Outdoors very useful on 2-3 occasions. The first outdoor program is conducted during our

**'Outdoors help in encouraging a positive 'opting in' and 'can do' attitude.'**

Induction Program. All new employees at Danfoss go through an outdoor program, which is facilitated by Empowered Learning Systems. It helps new employees to open up and know the organisation closely. It increases the pace of getting along with each other and building a rapport with their team.

Second, when the organisation is going through a large scale Change, we choose to go for an outdoor program. Change brings a lot of uncertainty in the environment. Employees have to face a lot of cross roads and new roads. We feel that the best way to get clarity is through 'Experiential Learning'. It helps in defining new targets, processes and dreams. It enables us to respond positively to opportunities, challenges and responsibilities. We learn to manage risk and cope up with change in a very non-threatening manner.

Third, when we have specific critical projects of physical nature we go for outdoor learning. The biggest problem is to pin point what is the real problem. In the outdoors, communication happens in the smoothest way and thus it helps to create a better understanding of the problem

**ET: How is facilitating classroom workshop different from facilitating in the outdoors?**

**AC:** The difference is, what cannot be done in the classroom can be done in the outdoors.

In a classroom session, we constantly need to maintain the motivation of the participants. Success of a classroom session depends upon the speaker, the presentation, the individual learner's participation, his/her frame of mind and the physical & mental presence. In case of learning in the outdoors, participants are actively learning because of higher involvement through intelligently designed activities. Outdoors help in encouraging a positive 'opting in' and 'can do' attitude. In addition, learning through observation is minimal in a classroom whereas it happens continuously in the outdoors. Most importantly there is self-realization of what is the problem, how is it done, how things can be better, what is my contribution and how can I contribute in a better way. It brings clarity of thoughts and helps in decision making because of the openness created by the environment by asking questions directly (no beating around the bush like in classroom learning).

**ET: What factors, in your opinion, are essential for a successful outdoor learning program?**

**AC:** The agenda for the program should be crystal-clear. We should know the messages we want to communicate, the challenges in doing it and then aptly selecting the learning activity. For example, in the year 2008, our agenda was to build endurance in the sales team so we decided to go for trekking to Dzungri (13,000ft. approx.), in Sikkim. Trekking at that height in snowfall required perseverance and a resolve to reach the top.

With the global economic crisis, it was a difficult time for everyone. In February this year, we set out for a 3-day sailing program. We wanted to convey to the team that even choppy and scary waters could be navigated, if you are well prepared. Thus, outdoor learning should symbolize the situation so that people relate easily & come up with innovative solutions. Other than the above, things to be kept in mind are safety and physical fitness of the people. We had well trained experts from Empowered Learning who would never compromise on the safety of our people. It is important to consider the physical fitness of team members to make sure that everyone participates and no one feels left out.



**ET: From your experience, can you share with us an impactful turnaround using the outdoors?**

**AC:** Our trek to Dzungri in Sikkim is one such experience. The agenda was clear 'build endurance in people to scale new business summits'. The team consisted of the National Sales Heads of Danfoss. The typical problem with sales people is that they talk more and listen less. On our trek, Malli\* our Expedition Leader instructed us to keep sipping water, but we did not listen, the consequence: we were dehydrated and some faced high altitude sickness. This could have been easily avoided had we followed Malli's instructions. We understood the importance of listening and the value of patience to listen. In that trek, everybody fell sick one after the other and all of us needed help. Together we exhorted each other, and the resolve remained undiminished.



In the evening, we were completely exhausted but we had a sense of achievement. We celebrated & enjoyed our achievement. This became a motivation for achieving the next milestone. Now my team knows what we seek out from a new challenge. Initially it is very thrilling but in difficult times, we need team effort, planning and most importantly a resolve to accomplish and ultimately we can relish the achievement and celebrate success. When we have the right people to guide us and we believe in our own & the team's capabilities, we can reach the epitome of success. What we achieved was much bigger than what we set for

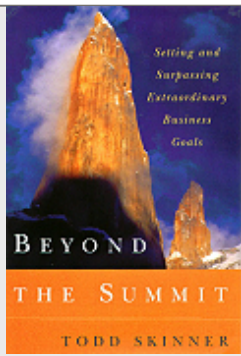
ourselves in the beginning.

Dzungri is such an evergreen experience even today, that every new achievement is declared as 'I have reached Dzungri'.

*\*Malli Mastan Babu (Malli) is a Guinness record holder (2006) for climbing the tallest peak in each of the seven continents in the shortest span of 172 days. He is also the only Indian seven summiter. Malli, an alumnus of IIM Calcutta, is an Engineering Graduate from NIT Jamshedpur and an M. Tech. from IIT Kharagpur. To know more about Malli visit his website [www.1stindian7summits.com](http://www.1stindian7summits.com)*

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**BETWEEN THE LINES**



## Beyond The Summit - Todd Skinner

Talking about experiential learning in the outdoors, we recommend 'Beyond The Summit', which brings around 40 lessons from the rock climbing experiences of the author.

Todd Skinner (1958 - 2006), a free climber, actually began this book while on the expedition to summit Trango Tower (20,500 ft.), in the Karakoram Himalayas. This is the highest freestanding spire and potentially the most challenging free climb in the world.

At 19,500 ft. in an unstable hanging tent, he was thinking about what leads to success? He thought of distilling all the lessons he learnt from the mountains and preparing a guide-book which would have strategies to help find answers in an unknown terrain. A list of essential things to carry in a backpack and what to leave behind. This book is the end-result of the thoughts he had on that dark frigid night.

Managing a business is like an expedition. We talk of scaling new heights, crossing barriers and facing challenges from the constantly changing environment, just the same as what mountain climbers do. Through his climbing experiences, he integrates his lessons from the mountains on deciding targets, planning strategies, choosing and preparing a team and facing obstacles. 'Beyond the Summit' offers many parallels to the business world. Some of the lessons from the book are:

- When you journey off the map, how you think is more important than what you know.
- Always measure your progress and your resources from the summit instead of the base.
- The mountain doesn't give a damn about your resume.
- Without hunger both skill and experience will remain at the base camp.
- Only an Ultimate mountain can forge an Ultimate team.
- You cannot lower the mountain, so you must raise yourself.
- The summit is made up of all the shoulders you stand upon.

Use this book as a good reference for the message of the outdoors.

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