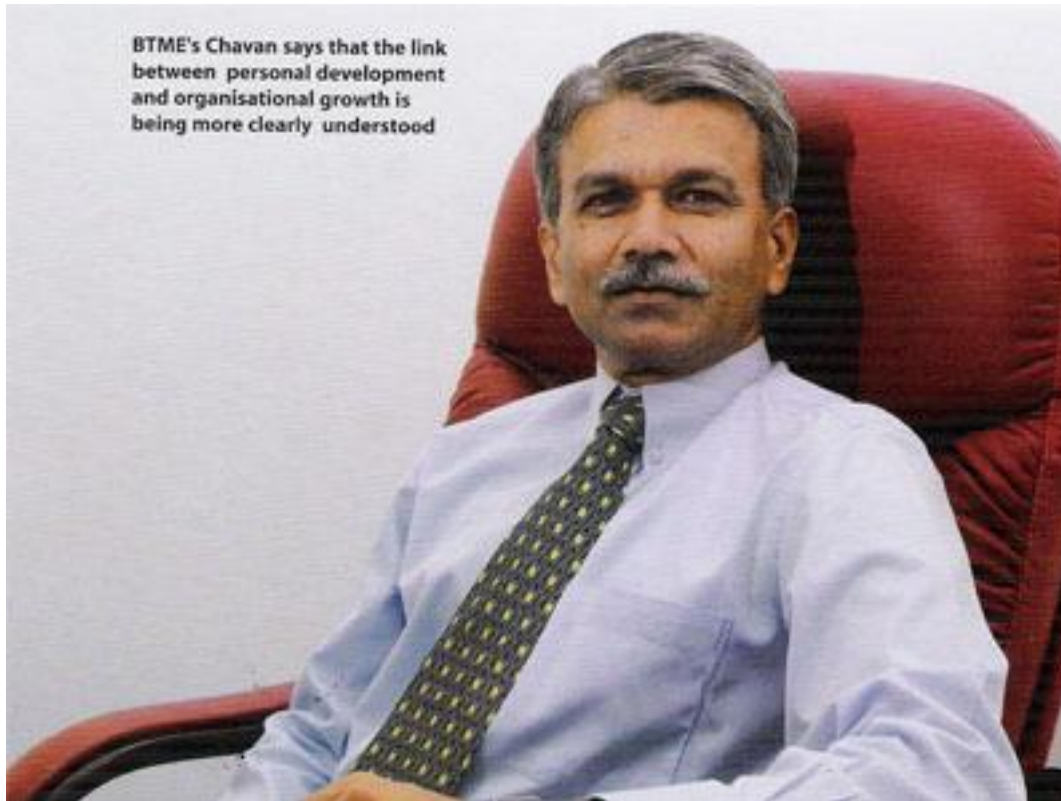


## New breed of trainers



A more recent phenomenon in the training scenario in Oman is experimental learning. Eschewing classroom training in favor of outdoor activities and experiences, these trainers believe that what you do and experience is likely to stay with you longer than what you see or hear. Oman has opened a new frontier in training. Mark Evans, general manager of Outward Bound Oman/Tahaddi, feels that the importance of soft skill training as a factor that determines performance is being recognized gradually. Outward Bound, a seven-decade old international training company that recently completed its first year in Oman, is another player in the outdoor training realm. Bin Tamman Enterprises (BTME). "Oman is going through a change in mindset. Companies were always particular about technical training. But they have started realizing that personal development of people contributes to organizational growth," says Surendra Chavan, human process consultant, BTME.

Outward Bound Oman and BTME have introduced programmes where teams travel to the great outdoors, which Evans calls the biggest classroom in the world, to change themselves and learn the rules of co-dependence, leadership and survival. One example of such activities would be appointing a leader and asking him or her to lead the group in a specific manner and gauge the response, following which, another leader would be asked to try a different approach. Organizations are now proactively asking for such programmes to achieve desired results. Evans recalls a challenging three-day course organized for Oman LNG on the mountains of Jebel Akhdar last May. Similarly, Sohar Aluminum sent cross-departmental teams to scale Mt Kilimanjaro as a reward for performance. In June 2011, Outward Bound Oman will be organizing a corporate challenge expedition to Mt Damavand in Iran.

Trekking and rappelling, besides team activities form the basis of Bin Tamman's workshops. The methodology employed is experimental learning, involving outdoor activities designed to make people challenge themselves in situations in which they have little or no experience. BTME's training division conducted its first programme in November 2007, for a team from BankMuscat. Chavan confesses that their first workshop was a nervous experience, since they didn't know what to expect. "It was an experimental team-building exercise attended by a large group from BankMuscat, which included ladies. Being tense about the culture difference, we were over-cautious," he admits. But the training exercise was very well received by all the participants. Since then, BTME has done around 20 programmes.