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THE WEEK

ANCIENT WISDOM, MODERN TRAINING

What do ancient battlefields and modern enterprises have in common? Plenty according to playwright, director and corporate trainer, Sanjay Srinivas, who was here in Muscat recently to hold a series of management workshops. Sanjay could well be forgiven for asking such a question and eliciting blank stares at the beginning of his presentation. After all, it's not every day that pearls of wisdom more than two millennia old are repackaged in a modern context and served to audiences in an easy to understand manner. But as the day progressed, the 50 strong audience began to understand the importance of seeing the 'bigger picture'. Every once in a while, it is important for a manager to pause, take a few steps back and look at oneself and the system that one works rather than slogging away as a small cog in a huge machine.

The three one-day workshops for management personnel from various enterprises in the sultanate were part of an Infoline initiative. Sameer Gupta, executive VP, Infoline, explained at the start of the event how corporate training was emerging as a key tool to improve team dynamics, team spirit and ultimately a company's bottom-line in a new Global era where competitiveness and liberalization are driving economic growth.

Using nine ratnas, or strategic principles, derived from the works of well-known ancient Indian philosopher and master strategist, Chanakya, Sanjay explained the functioning of the modern corporate world. The *ratnas* were discussed with the help of team building games, interactive discussions, documentaries like *The Corporation* and movie clippings from *The Pirates of Silicon Valley* and *Gandhi*. The workshop reinforced the idea that Chanakya's nine *ratna*'s, or master strategies, could be used effectively by a workforce at any modern-day enterprise for the good of both its employees as well as the company.

More than 120 managers from telecom, banking, construction and travel and tourism companies- Omantel, Standard Chartered Bank, Bank Muscat, Mezzoon Travels and Galileo Oman to name a few of the companies- participated in the workshops. The corporate training workshops were based on the popular play *Chanakyashastra* directed by Sanjay. The play was also staged in Muscat earlier this year to a large audience of over 800 people at InterContinental Muscat, courtesy Infoline and event management company, Light and Shadow.