

Teleworking as rural trade strategy: Producer skills for market competitiveness

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Abstract

At present, the new economy depends not only on the personalization with the customer but the identification of optimal administrative strategies, its evolution has generated transformations in the styles of generating efficient work processes with the support of technology from the territories. The objective of the research was to analyze the telework as a strategy of rural trade to achieve the construction of skills of the agricultural producer in the competitiveness in the market, specifically addresses the telework and rural trade in producers in the north and south of the Amazon region. The research is explanatory, with a quantitative, non-experimental method. For data collection, the survey technique was used, through a questionnaire with a Likert-type scale, applied to a sample of 465 agricultural producers. The results show a positive impact in the exploration of the creation of emerging themes in the studies of telework and sustainable rural trade, its impact on the agility of training producers to the diversity of rural scenarios that respond to global pandemics. It is concluded that the use of technology is key in the processes of work, that emerge new forms of learning in the obtaining of productive skills from the rural areas in Peru.

Keywords: Telework, rural commerce, competitiveness, market.

1. Introduction

The transformation processes that are currently taking place in the business world, generated since the spread of COVID-19 in the year 2020, caused challenges and challenges of adaptability, reorganization, and resilience for the survival of companies, in the face of these scenarios, strategies have been designed to respond quickly and operate under new forms of market relations, addressing and organizing

supply chains, from supply to points of consumption, effectively and efficiently. In this sense, there is a context that has forced the search for new ways of working processes and levels of optimization of efficiency, effectiveness, safety, food sovereignty, and productivity (García et al., 2021). Some essential derivations are outlined for the direction and management of agricultural companies and their insertion in the market is

supported by a commitment to social responsibility and a trend framed in rural trade, seeking leadership and competitiveness in the market (Caicedo et al., 2020; Ufrida, 2022).

In Latin America, it is estimated that 95 percent of companies are micro, small, and medium-sized. Of these, 90 percent would not be surviving beyond the 7th year. This type of company, overwhelmingly majority, contributes with 68 percent of employment and would contribute with ranges between 23 and 28 percent of the gross domestic product of the countries (Zeballos, 2003), i.e., the range of business growth over time is reduced; however, from the volume of its creation, there are high percentages of creation and sustainability over time and houses high rates of employment and creativity in business models.

From this perspective, companies as key players in the development and growth of the market, develop activities in the agricultural sector, oriented towards the generation of an internal performance of their management, which allows them to achieve competitiveness in the market, this business perspective depends on the demand of the sector. This in turn is in the income propensity and therefore the dynamics of employment, particularly in agricultural activities (agricultural and livestock), which generate new opportunities from entrepreneurship and innovation as major contributors to the success of new jobs in competitive and complex contexts (Nahar, 2022; Rajapathirana & Hui, 2018).

In Peru, after the arrival this decade of the Covid-19 pandemic, the business sector carried out a process of adaptability in the search for economic alternatives, specifically in the territory of the Amazon region, which is divided into the Northern Zone (Condorcanqui, Bagua, and Utcubamba) and the Southern Zone (Rodriguez de Mendoza, Chachapoyas, Luya, and Bongara). The Amazonas region has 3'924,913 ha of which only 159,934 ha (4.07%) are potentially usable for clean and permanent crops, and 5.41% (212,400 ha) are natural pastures; however, the reduced potentially usable space is still not used efficiently (Martin-Fiorino and Reyes, 2020).

Several changes have taken place in the trade of this Peruvian zone, which has led to multiple lessons and actions. From this, there is

evidence of a clear revival and innovation with strategies that articulate the productive activities of the agricultural, livestock, and agri-food sector, although they are strategic sectors in which labor activity cannot be limited to the physical presence and constitute a fundamental pillar in the livelihood of society. There are technical, administrative, and human difficulties, evident to implement telework in rural trade by its very nature productive and maintains competitiveness in the local, regional, national, and international market. As noted by Calderon (2020, p. 12), “stimulate and strengthen the creative capacity of its employees, rethink the place of technology in their jobs and especially see in the difficulties moments of opportunity” (Chesbrough, 2020).

Technological innovation becomes a feasible strategic ally to face financial, operational, and organizational challenges. There is theoretical evidence that recognizes the efforts that companies are consolidating from different perspectives, including the renewal of the organizational structure from the technological point of view, new vision of the client, technological applications, professionalization, entrepreneurship, administrative control systems, occupational and mental health programs, promoting continuous improvement, to capitalize and try to position themselves (Gil-Lafuente & Luis-Bassa, 2011; Gómez-Bayona et al., 2020). However, there are very few empirical references that explain the role of telework in rural trade during the pandemic, although there is an acceptance of the incorporation of telework processes into agricultural activities by their productive nature through digital solutions, which are designed and adjusted in management processes and advanced work processes of farms in the sector under study, which mostly do not understand how these practices can be adopted and fair to improve competitiveness in the market (Montes de Oca, 2020).

For all the above, the objective of this research is to analyze the telework as a strategy of rural trade, in the construction of skills of the producer for competitiveness in the market, specifically addresses the telework and rural trade in producers in the north of the Amazonas region. Why is it necessary to analyze telework as a strategy of rural trade, in the construction of skills of the producer for competitiveness?

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Literature review

Administrative management based on people skills

The management of people becomes a key element, “which gives validity and use to the other resources, in this sense the staff of the organization can develop skills and competencies that will allow the competitive advantage of the company can be sustained” (Montoya & Boyero, 2016, p. 2), that is to say, that to the extent that people acquire a cumulus of knowledge will be available in its applicability in the field they experience, in the sense of obtaining skills and abilities that generate significant impacts.

According to the transcendence of the subject Mendoza et al. (2018) seeks to make known strategically the administrative management and from this to make known in what way the

planning, organization, direction, and coordination of the organizations will be improved, due to the decision-making process and the training processes of the people, in this case, the producers their performance will be in function of the knowledge, abilities, and skills they acquire to attend and respond before the existing technological and social transformations.

Concept and typologies of telework

The plurality and evolution in the implementation of telework make it difficult to establish a common typology. Despite this, Villaseca (2004) presents a first classification in which he differentiates eight different criteria (Table 1):

Table 1: Typologies of Telework

Criteria	Types of Telework
Location	At home
	Mobile,
	In telecenters,
	In shared resource centers or satellite offices
Seasonality	Permanent
	Alternate
Work Schedule	Full-time
	Part-time
Technician	Permanent connection (online)
	Connection when needed (offline)
Value Chain	In-house projects
	Outsourced activities
Occupation Status	Employer-employee relationship (subordination)
	Self-employed-client relationship (non-subordination)
Communication	Offline.
	In-line:
	One-way (unidirectional line).

	Interactive (Bidirectional line)
Compensation	Fixed salary
	Fixed salary plus variable
	At a fixed price
	Per unit of time

From this, Galvez (2008) highlighted the criterion of location (according to the geographical location from where teleworking is performed), the criterion of temporality (according to the days of the week, the month, among others, in which teleworking is performed), the criterion of the usual schedule (according to the type of day), the technical criterion (according to the connection used in telework), the criterion of the value chain (according to the place of telework in the production cycle), the criterion of the contractual relationship (according to the status of the occupation) and the criterion of remuneration (according to the type of consideration for the work).

For teleworking, organizational culture plays an important role, highlighting the various values, beliefs, and work processes that are generated internally and externally by management. It should be noted that Schein (1988) conceptualizes three levels of culture that are neither static nor independent, but are interrelated and form the basic beliefs and assumptions of organizational culture: "Level 1: Productions...is given by its physical and social environment. At this level, it is worth observing the physical space, the technological capacity of the group, its written and spoken language, and the expressed behavior of its members. At level 2, values that ultimately reflect how individuals should relate to each other, exercise power and can be validated if they are found to reduce uncertainty and anxiety. Level 3, basic underlying assumptions that allow the solution to a problem when it has been given repeatedly and is eventually settled..." (Schein, 1988), all these dynamics make that in the management of its organization, telework processes are generated, with the support of training and technological processes (Saez et al., 2007).

Technological element: Accessibility

Of the differentiating elements of telework, the indispensable use of technology which is a

determinant and characteristic element, and the use of technologies allows distinguishing telework from homework, since the latter is characterized by the exchange of quantifiable and fungible material goods between the employer, who provides them, and the worker, who adds value through his work (Caamaño, 2010).

Arango (2000) analyzes the changes occurring today in the business environment, characterized by the globalization of the economy, and the continuous introduction of new technologies in the production and management processes in organizations, which have caused in turn, changes in the structures within them, with a tendency to flatten structures and the constant evolution of jobs, which makes it difficult to maintain their stability.

One of the precisions regarding the scope of intervention is that the rural areas of the Amazon region in recent years have been suffering depopulation of their territories due to the lack of attention given by the State and where information technologies are developing rapidly. These advances lead to the use of new strategies in rural areas, where new opportunities are arising from the globalization of the labor market and the use of new technologies, which leads to geographic flexibility, allowing the development of the most disadvantaged areas, in which the use of teleworking is recommended as a way to interrupt rural depopulation, mainly among the population that resists change and where there is an isolation of the worker because in many cases he/she lacks qualifications and whose incidence is reflected more in young people, where it is a sector that has more impact on the socio-economic aspect.

Competitiveness and rural trade

Competitiveness in organizations is conceived as how companies stand out from their competitors (Porter, 2001). In this sense, organizations require to use new strategies that favor the development of their processes, improve their income, and allow them to be recognized abroad for their brand (Aguilera et al., 2016). In addition, the inclusion of vulnerable sectors of the population in a labor modality allows the integration of sectors that

until now had not had this opportunity (Matthes, 1992).

Another important aspect that has been considered in teleworking is the contribution made by this means of linking innovative organizations, which favor the employability of people by making the inclusion of technologies as a facilitating tool of the process (Benjumea et al., 2016). Precisely, the culture of innovation is essential to help the capacity for innovation and contribute to the development of competitiveness in organizations (Souto, 2015). This evidences that an organization can acquire a competitive advantage in any of its areas (Porter, 2001) and compete freely in the market by strengthening its organizational processes (Garcia & Martinez, 2016); however, it requires using its resources and capabilities to enter the advantage based on telework (Karia, & Asaari, 2016).

Methodology

The methodology used to approach this research is the quantitative method, with a descriptive type of study and a non-experimental field research design. The technique used for data collection was the survey, through the use of the questionnaire with a Likert-type scale, composed of 40 items (20 systematized for the variable telework and 20 for the variable rural trade), applied to 465 producers of the livestock and agricultural sector of the Amazon region, divided into the province of the North Zone (Condorcanqui, Bagua, and Utcubamba) and the South Zone (Rodriguez de Mendoza, Chachapoyas, Luya, and Bongara), in the year 2021.

The population consisted of 38,800 producers in the Amazonas region who carry out livestock and agricultural activities (National Institute of Statistics and Informatics of Peru). A simple random probability sampling was used, with a maximum estimation error level of 5%, an estimated percentage of 50%, and a confidence

level of 97%. After calculating the sample formula, 465 producers were selected. The analysis of the data obtained was based on descriptive statistics using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 22 (SPSS).

Results

Elements of acceptance of teleworking in the rural region of Amazonas Peru

While the development of telework in organizations has been manifested since the organizations adjust to those models that allow them to achieve their achievements and consequently these dynamics account for a model of the trade from the rural that determines the exchange of goods and services under other few traditional dynamics from the rural. The producers to make permanence in the market located in the rural area affirm that the context of the pandemic accelerated these modalities, creating conditions for the technological accessibility in which they have to dispose to attend these circumstances of sanitary emergency, being necessary to enhance the quality of qualification of the personnel towards the professionalization and specialization of the personnel that supports the rural producers in Amazonas-Peru (Buitrago, 2016)

This is in addition to the changes that have been generated as a consequence of the development of technological tools that are already available to all social strata, such as the Internet, computers, and technological devices that will allow performing tasks from any place other than the office (CINDA, 2000). These characterizations are supported by the rapid advances in information technologies. One of its main causes and trends of teleworking in rural areas reflects trends and some typologies of survival of work in an increasingly competitive market. The following are the average levels characterized in the typology of jobs in rural areas.

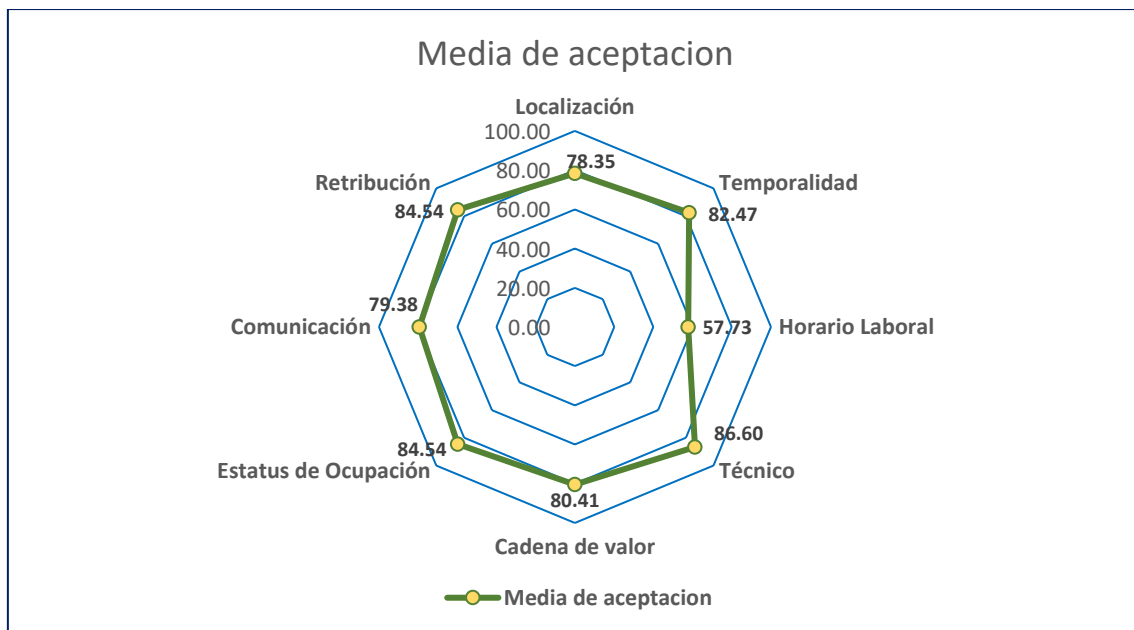


Figure 1 Levels of mean acceptance in characterization in the work typology

The agricultural and livestock producers state that they are realistic in the ability to make timely decisions and to be able to adapt the models they operate. Regarding teleworking the rural producers surveyed, highlight that the means of location, temporality, working hours, technical, value chain, occupational status, communication, and remuneration, characterize the typologies of work and that with the support of information technology are generated relevant organizational transformations that lead to the adoption of new methods of work, among which is the teleworking, to respond to crises, as well as opportunities and develop strategic responses that allow facing those unexpected situations. All this is for the organizational model to be able to react before the competition and thus take advantage of them. In addition, rural producers must foster continuous and assertive communication, as this is an essential condition for making quick decisions.

Technological accessibility is an adverse element to the willingness of adaptability that exists among producers and is what refers to the existence of a real digital divide for many rural areas of the Note and Southern Amazon-Peru, therefore, it must be an unavoidable priority to address in a timely and competitive manner the creation, maintenance, and management of technologies, infrastructure, and services for access to technology. In this sense, the producers affirm that the logic of

economic profitability makes them adjust and protect the personnel with the search for alternatives to new work processes, which are limited in the agricultural and livestock and are adjusted from the administrative processes, establishing a control system and coherent information systems that contribute to the decision-making process.

This is ratified by Crisanto (2015), who expresses that there are several studies that since 2020, begin to promote telework as an innovative and competitive management strategy, highlighting clear examples of success in other spaces, consequently it becomes a labor option for many years, such as the case of China and India who according to studies by Universia Spain (2013). It is estimated that will be the countries with the largest number of teleworkers, followed by the United States and Europe will also present a significant increase in this form of work. This taking as a reference that for that same year the population of teleworkers worldwide was in the order of 37.2%, the Amazon region located in the South of the American continent, also has adjustments in work processes, indicating that they are trends in new management models, applied and generated since the pandemic.

With these appreciations, it is important to state that in a globalized world, the great economic powers in the world are comprised of their performance and activities in the market. For this, it is necessary to point out that there are

innovative elements within each organization that make them more effective than others and it is there where the individual contribution of the local actors - producers and the relations of the members of an organization, company, and/or association influence this.

Telework as a tool for inclusion: Competencies acquired from producers and support staff to rural trade in the Amazonas region of Peru

Telework can be distinguished in the use of generating a rural trade and is presented as an ideal system that allows a better balance between personal life and professional development, which facilitates greater flexibility in the provision of labor and time management of workers, saves time and resources both economic and environmental displacement, as well as a reduction in costs for companies in office space, electricity, furniture (Perez and Galvez, 2009).

In this order of ideas, teleworking makes use of telematic means unlike homework, which is executed anywhere, whether inside or outside the home, benefits not only people with disabilities or women in charge of the home; but also too sick or people who are following

long treatments, people deprived of their freedom, to workers who by the remoteness of their homes can be grouped and attend telecenters or telecottages (whose implementation benefits rural areas) or that for reasons of climate is more beneficial not to travel to work (Flexibility, 2000; Perez, 1998).

This modality of work achieves that, in the North and South Zone of the Amazonas Region of Peru, a great number of producers manage to advance in their production, commercialization channels, and distribution of products by the organization of their workers under diverse motives. The managerial or generic competencies are in turn classified into strategic competencies that must locate competencies in their workers oriented to the ability to reflect, prioritize what is important, optimize resources, and improve internal communication, time management, critical thinking, motivation, and curiosity.

According to Escobar (2005), the concept of competencies is widely used these days in the business context, to designate a set of elements or factors associated with success in the performance of people, and when reference is made to its origins (Figure 2).

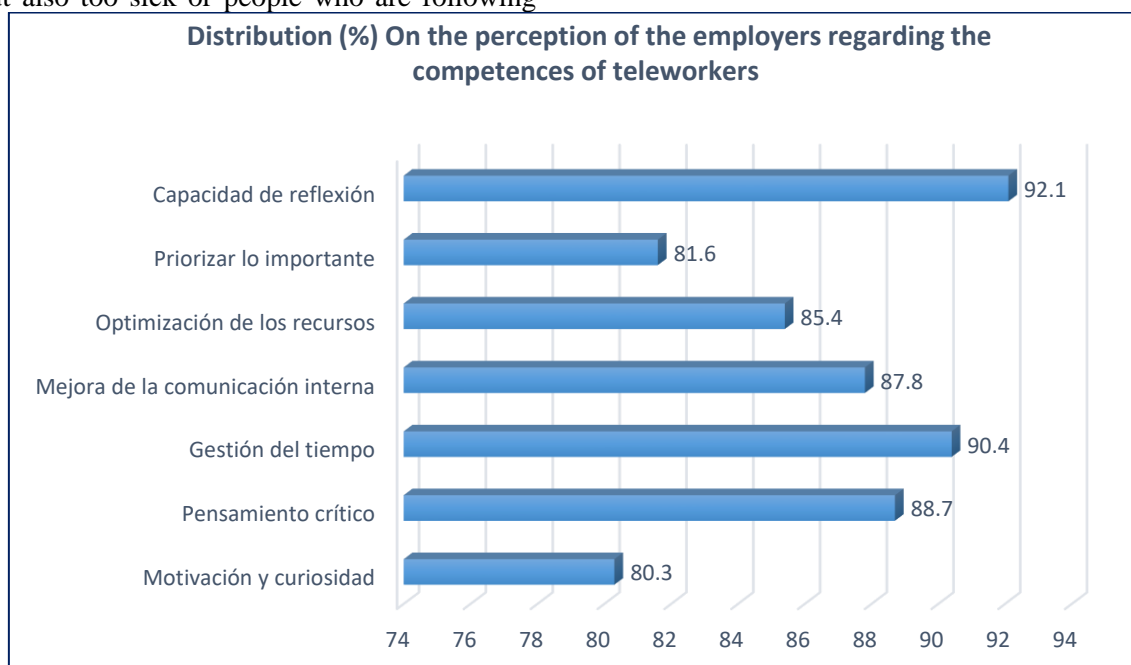


Figure 2. Percentage distribution of employers' perception of the skills required by teleworkers.

Indicators are obtained from the evaluation that allows reflecting the perception of the employers concerning how to establish

competencies that must consider the teleworkers as a perspective that in a short term would be taken into account in the process of

evaluation, from it there are a series of modalities of development that the organizations would be applying or that have the perspective of applying it, for it they come giving a series of programs with these aims and that can be used exclusively.

The development of skills and potentialities of people is necessary to perform by electronic

means. The development of information and communication technologies forces people to be prepared to adapt to new work modalities in the labor field, where information and communication technologies are also present. In that sense, a proposal of Articulation of the agrarian development and the rural Trade supported by telework is presented.

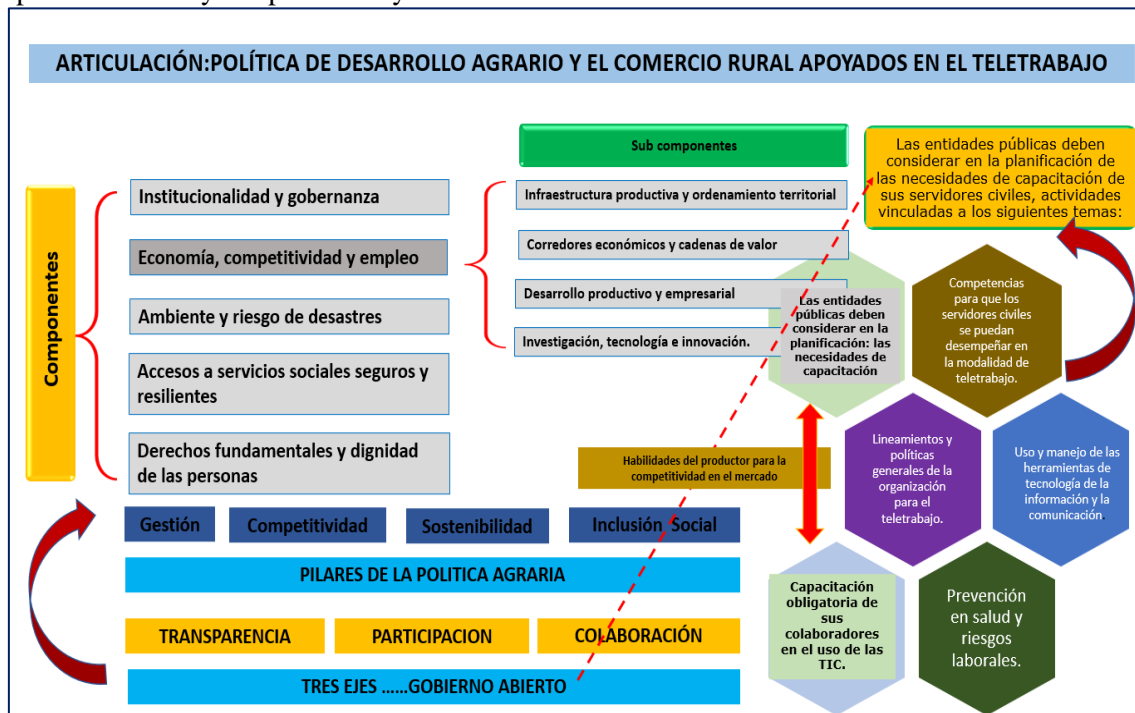


Figure 3 Agricultural policy: Teleworking as a trend in rural commerce.

The new context of the information society and the development of information and communication technologies affect the economic, political, social, and cultural spheres. The transformation of the labor market is a clear example of the changes brought about by the so-called digital economy. On the one hand, new jobs and professional profiles are emerging that require mastery of these technologies. On the other hand, a new model of job search emerges: the Web acts as an intermediary element between providers and seekers" (Begoña et al., 2017).

Finally, teleworking influences rural trade, and the skills of the producer are directly associated with the acquisition and training in technology, although there are several adaptations to be generated, about process innovation, which is based on the incorporation of new or convincingly improved technology and the introduction of processes and results of its incorporation by producers to obtain

competitiveness in the agricultural and livestock market.

Conclusions

The producers of the agricultural and livestock sector of the North and South Zone of the Amazon region in Peru, recognize the importance of telework and rural trade and seek greater possibilities and efforts to innovate and market their work processes, and marketing. However, the quality of life is one of the particularities with a greater accreditation for teleworking because it is related to the aspects of spending more time with the family, the decrease in travel time, reducing the level of stress, the generation of confidence and motivation to the fulfillment of their activities part of the institution allowing to develop their diligence from their homes.

With an optimal level of organization and a more effective follow-up to the response times of the activities and indicators foreseen in the management documents, the area would substantially improve its production concerning the number of activities - negotiations, generating a good information system, outlining a projection of complementary activities and with the skills of the producer would allow a greater impact on the competitiveness of the organization, complying more efficiently with its services provided within the expected time to all its customers.

The new labor trend focused on teleworking is a modality of professional performance that was approved and promoted by the State from which it is expected greater dissemination of the guidelines within the framework of labor inclusion and that today is a means of realization of the person from which social welfare is sought. The public labor policies should be developed with a focus on human rights and the environment, with this policy many teleworkers, have the possibility of accessing a job according to the rules adopted in Peru. Its trend in the use of telework is increasing the same that is focused on the public and private sectors which are expected to clarify their guidelines for a better application of teleworking.

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