

As explained, Microsoft help desk service was the basis for PORCIDE’s implementation. In this area a group of 7 physically disabled persons replaced a support team of 4 persons previously based in the company’s offices, providing the latter with a reduction in costs and space, necessary for other activities, and the former with an opportunity of work and career development that would otherwise be very difficult to achieve. The activities were extended to other areas, namely creation of templates and business planning, to which were distributed the remaining individuals involved on this project.

The average age of these persons is 25 years and 86% are males. All were introduced to telework through PORCIDE. From the distributed inquiries we receive several opinions and remarks we think it is important to share with our partners. Concerning the concept of telework, 80% of the persons stated that this turned to be their favourite method of work. It is natural that quite a few referred that after a while telework was their prime choice due to health reasons / physical deficiencies which limited their ability to move and be independent, seen as complementary. These last were also mentioned several times in “Other” motives.

Productivity was also given a high mark, due to the greater concentration pointed as one advantage when working alone. We should see this preference in the light of the scarce opportunities the labour market offers to these persons, and this is the added

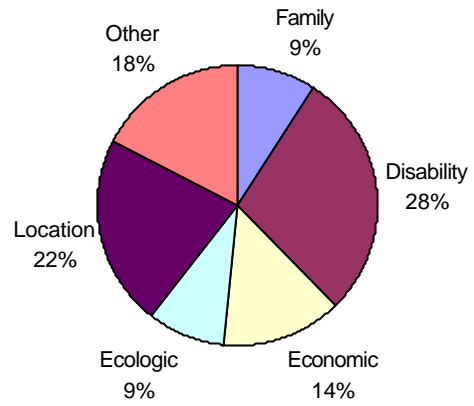


Figure 1 - Reasons to choose telework

value of the project, despite the economic attraction of it. Figure 1 provides a general overview of the answers.

We can conclude that physical (health) motives and underlying difficulties, such as **mobility and geographic location resulted in 68% of the weight for preferring telework**. This shows clearly the relevance of this concept of work to these persons and the advantages they see in using it to be inserted in society as independent and active citizens.

Figure 2 clarified that the most used mean of communication between the elements - at the beginning of the project - was phone. As time passed and the technological environment was friendlier, this rate decreased and other forms assumed primacy, such as voice chat, videoconference rooms and more

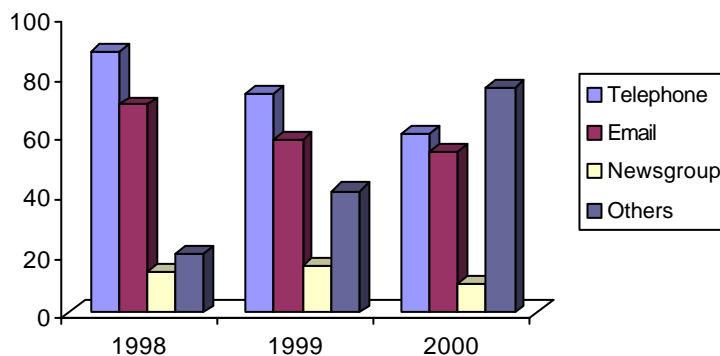


Figure 2 - Most used mean of communication

recently Microsoft Messenger.

Subjacent to the communication mean are other questions, the most relevant being the interactive help that each individual can provide and receive from the other group participants. It is only natural that mutual questions and solutions are launched in the virtual space of communication, allowing further advantages: teamwork, real-time information share, knowing who is available at a precise moment, etc. In these aspects, Microsoft Messenger proved to be an excellent tool, driving the phone to a secondary plan and reducing costs.

Examining communication itself, we find that the answers posed to each other usually receive a timely answer, useful for their immediate work. This results in a positive **environment that is not significantly affected by geographic dispersion**. As to communication with the responsible for supervising the work, there are literally no differences, which result in a generally very positive picture. Although the 10% attributed to "Sometimes" should be seen as a

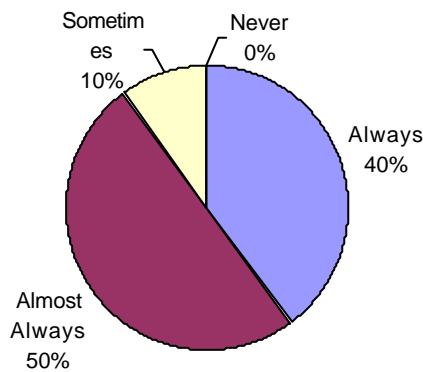


Figure 3 - Did you receive timely answers?

concern, in reality it was due to problems of integration felt by some elements and not the network itself. In the end, the envisaged spirit of cooperation and close communication was achieved.

The tools most referred by the group of teleworkers were: computer (basic tool), Microsoft Messenger (accompanying measures and support tool), phone (mostly to contact clients or exterior persons), e-mail (data exchange several times a day), microphone (crucial to on-line meetings), headsets (allow free hands to work and talk simultaneously) and Netmeeting (share/modification of documents). Of course, Internet is the subjacent mean of communication, helping also in other areas, such as research.

As for the **tools that the teleworkers would like to see improved** in order to

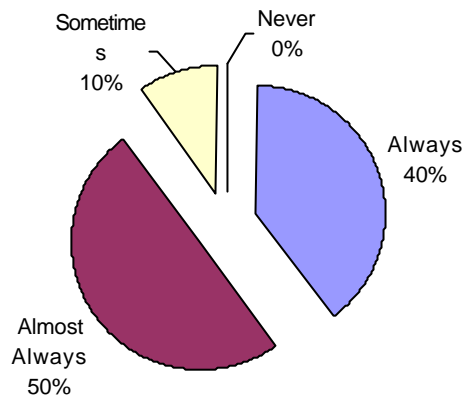


Figure 4 – Availability and work responsible' answer

achieve better work performance, they mentioned:

- a) the option of a 24 hour connection to the Internet, to fully benefit from the Microsoft Messenger and e-mail advantages.
- b) the backup system CD-Writer, indispensable to save daily information and due to new viruses.
- c) Web cameras, for videoconferences.

As to training, the decision was made to provide a specific technical formation related to the various areas in which the teleworkers were to be integrated. After

this phase, 65% of the persons said they thought the received training was enough to start working. But they felt the need for further – continuous – training to enhance their capabilities and maintain the necessary qualifications. This is most visible as new products become available.

Concerning general work evaluation, 80% of the group considered their work a challenge. In TELEMANutenção we tried to:

- a) correspond to their initial expectations
- b) favour their adaptation
- c) cope with their sense of isolation
- d) diversify their work
- e) promote relationships between the different work groups
- f) provide them with a credible opportunity to achieve success

In result, the **overall opinion of the group concerning project PORCIDE was classified as “excellent”** and all the elements considered that it has great success possibilities. The most positive aspect to the persons was the team spirit that was created. However, we recognise that some aspects need to be improved, especially what relates to group enlargement,<sup>1</sup> service optimisation and training. This is valuable information for a project also designed as a pilot action aiming at improving telework group management.

TELEMANutenção has also noted a tremendous evolution since we have started, not only in individual productivity but also in the sort of support granted. Many of the systems used today have been fine-tuned using the experience obtained and the

evolution of technology. There is a general degree of satisfaction concerning the fastness and user-friendly simplicity of the systems chosen to build a communication network. This results in a general feeling of support directly related to technology.

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*There is a general feeling of support directly related to technology*

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The answers obtained allow us to conclude that these teleworkers feel isolation but it does not reach unbearable levels. This is a subject that needs further improvement, but it is also one consequence of telework. If we try to balance the benefits and disadvantages we find that the first are much higher than the later, because the project itself promotes integration, both professional and social. Furthermore, TELEMANutenção promotes social relations through – on site whenever possible – meetings, forging lasting ties between the team and other company personnel. And we must always take into consideration that a disabled person would have much more problems if he or she had to go everyday from home to the office. In the end, we acknowledge these difficulties as part of telework, feeling although compensated by the practical results – especially social – of this initiative.

In numeric terms,<sup>2</sup> the results of the PORCIDE’s objective of the persons in

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<sup>1</sup> Insertion of new persons in a previously constituted group of teleworkers.

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<sup>2</sup> Consult the Portuguese magazine *Exame* published in December 2000.

the labour market allows the following conclusions:

**Table 1**  
**Percentage of Persons Distributed by Labour Market Sectors**

Telework / In Loco	Company's Cadres	Own Business
28%	75%*	25%

\* 70% of these persons are working as independent professionals. 30% are inserted in TELEMAnutenção.

We must emphasize the fact that in terms of average customer satisfaction, in 1999 achieved 88% while in 2000 rose to 92%. This shows **the significance of a project contemplating high quality services for large companies and social concerns.**

**Table 2**  
**Professional Roles**

Managing	Coordination / Technical	Technical
14%	21%	65%

Note: 14% are female, 86% are male.

All these persons have at least 18 months of continuous professional experience. 80% of these are coordinated and supported by TELEMAnutenção, while 20% are totally independent or depending on other companies.

**Table 3**  
**Academic Qualifications**

High School	Bachelor Degree	License Degree
51%	14%	35%

Note: 85% of these persons are under 30 years of age; 15% are above that figure.

We must stress the motivation factor behind PORCIDE: from our surveys and experience, we concluded that **the most important variable is the opportunity of employment.** Usually, people with physical problems depend a great deal of family support, often with financial limitations. The increase of the household income brings extra stability and security, as well as **self-esteem to the person, who becomes an independent part of the society, respected and recognised as individual.** This is according to the Disabled Persons Rights Declaration, which states that these persons have "the right to measures destined to [promote their] autonomy."<sup>3</sup> Table 4 shows clearly the financial benefits of the persons involved in PORCIDE.

**Table 4**  
**Average Monthly Income**

120 000\$00-150 000\$00	200 000\$00-250 000\$00	Above 500 000\$00
28%	15%	57%

Presently, from the persons participating in PORCIDE, 100% possess a stable professional situation and all are contributors to social security. **Before the implementation of PORCIDE, all were unemployed and professionally inactive.** PORCIDE made the difference, as THINK will.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 3447, 9 December 1975.