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BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION: THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF THE INNOVATION RADAR IN MICRO AND SMALL ENTERPRISES

TRANSFORMAÇÃO EMPRESARIAL: O PAPEL ESTRATÉGICO DO RADAR DE INOVAÇÃO NAS MICRO E PEQUENAS EMPRESAS

TRANSFORMACIÓN EMPRESARIAL: EL PAPEL ESTRATÉGICO DEL RADAR DE INNOVACIÓN EN LAS MICRO Y PEQUEÑAS EMPRESAS

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ABSTRACT

The SEBRAE's ALI Productivity Program is a strategic initiative focused on boosting the innovation and competitiveness of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in Brazil. This article analyzes the effectiveness of the Innovation Radar, the program's central tool, in the productive transformation of MSEs assisted by Local Innovation Agents (ALIs). Based on an MIT model and adapted by SEBRAE, the Radar is a comprehensive diagnostic tool that assesses everything from managerial controls to innovative practices, providing a complete business overview. By examining the Radar's application in Cycle 1, this research aims to prove its importance in the final evaluation of revenue, costs, and productivity. Companies that prioritized deficit areas such as ESG and Managerial Controls achieved success, maximizing their productivity. However, analyses of negative results revealed a critical disconnect between the deficiencies pointed out by the Radar and the action priorities chosen by the MSEs, emphasizing the need for greater awareness of essential practices. In summary, the success of the ALI Productivity Program does not depend solely on the quality of the tool, but on the commitment of the entrepreneurs. The program, combined with the strategic use of the Radar, can catalyze the positive transformation of MSEs, provided there is an active partnership between ALIs and companies for the effective implementation of action plans.

Keywords: SEBRAE. ALI Productivity. Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs). Innovation Radar. Innovation.

RESUMO

O Programa ALI Produtividade, do SEBRAE, destaca-se como uma iniciativa estratégica visando fortalecer a inovação e competitividade das micro e pequenas empresas (MPEs) no Brasil. Este artigo focaliza a análise da eficácia do Radar de Inovação, ferramenta central do programa, na transformação produtiva das MPEs assistidas pelos Agentes Locais de Inovação (ALIs). Originado no MIT e adaptado pelo SEBRAE, o Radar é um diagnóstico abrangente que aborda desde controles gerenciais até práticas inovadoras, proporcionando uma visão completa do ambiente empresarial. Ao explorar a aplicação do Radar no ciclo 1 do ALI Produtividade, a pesquisa visa compreender a importância dessa ferramenta na

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avaliação final de faturamento, custos e produtividade. Empresas que priorizaram áreas deficitárias, como ESG e Controles Gerenciais, alcançaram sucesso na maximização da produtividade. Contudo, algumas empresas enfrentaram desafios ao não correlacionar adequadamente deficiências identificadas pelo Radar e prioridades de ação. Análises de empresas com resultados negativos destacaram uma desconexão entre deficiências apontadas pelo Radar e as prioridades escolhidas pelas empresas, enfatizando a necessidade de conscientização sobre práticas essenciais para a produtividade. O sucesso do ALI Produtividade não depende apenas da qualidade da ferramenta, mas também da compreensão e comprometimento das empresas atendidas. Em síntese, o programa, combinado ao eficaz uso do Radar, pode catalisar a transformação positiva das MPEs, contanto que haja uma parceria ativa entre ALIs e empresas para a implementação efetiva de planos de ação.

Palavras-chave: SEBRAE. ALI Produtividade. Micro e Pequenas Empresas (MPE's). Radar de Inovação. Inovação.

RESUMEN

El Programa ALI Productividad de SEBRAE se destaca como una iniciativa estratégica orientada a fortalecer la innovación y competitividad de las micro y pequeñas empresas (MPEs) en Brasil. Este artículo se centra en analizar la eficacia del Radar de Innovación, la herramienta central del programa, en la transformación productiva de las MPEs asistidas por los Agentes Locales de Innovación (ALIs). Originado en el MIT y adaptado por SEBRAE, el Radar es un diagnóstico integral que aborda desde controles gerenciales hasta prácticas innovadoras, ofreciendo una visión completa del entorno empresarial. Al explorar la aplicación del Radar en el ciclo 1, la investigación busca comprobar la importancia de esta herramienta en la evaluación final de facturación, costes y productividad. Las empresas que priorizaron áreas deficitarias como ESG (Ambiental, Social y Gobernanza) y Controles Gerenciales lograron el éxito, maximizando su productividad. Sin embargo, los análisis de resultados negativos revelaron una desconexión crítica entre las deficiencias señaladas por el Radar y las prioridades de acción elegidas por las MPEs, lo que enfatiza la necesidad de una mayor concienciación sobre prácticas esenciales. En resumen, el éxito del ALI Productividad no solo depende de la calidad de la herramienta, sino del compromiso de los empresarios. El programa, combinado con el uso estratégico del Radar, puede catalizar la transformación positiva de las MPEs, siempre y cuando exista una asociación activa entre los ALIs y las empresas para la implementación efectiva de los planes de acción.

Palabras clave: SEBRAE. ALI Productividad. Micro y Pequeñas Empresas (MiPyMEs). Radar de Innovación. Innovación.

1 INTRODUCTION

The ALI Productivity Program - Local Innovation Agents - Productivity is an initiative of SEBRAE (Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service) with the purpose of fostering a culture of innovation and improving the competitiveness of micro and small companies in Brazil (Sebrae, 2025).

In this program, the Local Innovation Agents, professionals highly trained by SEBRAE, play a fundamental role. They work directly with companies, offering specialized advice in areas such as management, innovation, and technology. In addition, they assist companies in identifying market opportunities and developing solutions to overcome specific challenges. A relevant point is that participation in the program is entirely free for the companies involved (Sebrae, 2025).

The ALI Productivity is aimed at micro and small companies that wish to innovate and improve their management, with a focus on maximizing productivity, increasing revenue, and reducing costs (Sebrae, 2025).

Among the various dimensions of the entrepreneurial world that Ali proposes to investigate is the Productivity indicator and the business areas: management controls, operations management, marketing management, innovation practices, digital transformation and ESG - Environmental, Social and Governance. All these aspects are observed through the Innovation Radar tool, which is considered the first crucial encounter between the Agent and the company, in order to observe and analyze weaknesses, strengths, threats and opportunities.

Based on these assumptions, this article proposes to analyze how the interpretation of the Radar instrument can be crucial in the application of the measured results of "meeting 9" (nine) of the Ali Productivity. It is in this sense that it is intended to:

- Analyze final measurements of revenue, variable costs and employed people in cycle 1 of the ALI Productivity and compare them with the initial measurement of the companies served by the N4 agents in the regional office of Presidente Prudente;
- Understand the importance of the Radar as a primary factor for the analysis of problems and action plans and the consequent success in the final measurement;
- Compare companies with increased productivity with those with decreased production and their respective radars.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 THE INNOVATION RADAR

The ALI Productivity Journey takes place in cycles of up to six months, starting with the entrepreneur's interest in introducing innovation into their company. This journey is composed of the following stages: beginning of the journey; mapping of challenges and solutions; knowledge of indicators; knowing the means of testing; creation and testing of the prototype; implementation planning; implementation evaluation; completion of the workday; measurement of results (Sebrae, 2022).

Each stage has its relevance for organizational success and attack on the business bottlenecks listed, but the stage at the beginning of the journey has a relevant aspect in the sense of identifying the problems and in which aspects actions should be created for implementation.

The Innovation Radar plays a crucial role as it represents the first significant delivery of the ALI Project to the entrepreneur, providing a detailed analysis of the company's current situation. Each dimension of the ALI Radar has been carefully crafted based on a series of questions, serving as an essential guide for evaluating the practices adopted by the company. For effective application, it is imperative to thoroughly understand each topic and its issues, ensuring that, by collecting evidence, it is possible to assist the entrepreneur in classifying the current context of the company according to the corresponding degree of maturity (Sebrae, 2022).

The objective of the ALI Radar is to show the entrepreneur the company's potential and identify points for improvement. The presentation of evidence by the entrepreneur is essential to validate the indicated level. The answers and evidence must be registered in the system, which, in the end, will generate the result of the Radar (web) and a feedback proposal. After applying the Radar, the system will provide detailed feedback with the results of the answers provided by the entrepreneur. In addition, the application of the Radar will reveal the company's financial maturity, especially in the dimension of management by indicators (Sebrae, 2022).

If the company does not have a structured system to monitor revenue, as well as its variable and fixed costs, it is recommended to refer the entrepreneur to financial guidance, financial workshop, or another solution offered by the local Sebrae to address this issue (Sebrae, 2022).

According to Davila, Epstein and Shelton (2007), innovation can be categorized into two aspects: technological innovation and innovation in the business model. Both must occur simultaneously, however, it is up to the leadership to establish which models and tools will be used to ensure this simultaneity.

The Innovation Radar is a mechanism for diagnosis. It was originally conceived by researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), in the United States, and later adapted by Sebrae. This method addresses several dimensions in which a company can seek innovation. When performing this assessment, it is essential to understand that innovation is not an isolated event, but the result of a continuous process. Therefore, the analysis is not limited only to the number of innovations, but extends to the evaluation of the maturity of the innovation management process in companies, an essential factor for competitiveness in the market (Sebrae, 2013).

Currently, the Innovation Radar implemented has 24 questions that address 6 dimensions to be analyzed, each with 4 questions, they are: management controls; operations management; marketing management; innovation practices; digital transformation, and; ESG – environmental, social and governance. It should be noted that it has not always been the way it is implemented in the ALI Productivity, being developed and improved over time, without losing its essence, which is to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of organizations.

2.1.1 Innovation

For Schumpeter (1982), innovation can manifest itself in five different ways:

a) Launch of a new product or qualitative modification to an existing product;
b) Process innovation that represents a novelty for an industry;
c) Exploration of a new market;
d) Development of new sources for the acquisition of raw materials or other inputs;
e) Changes in the organizational structure of the industry.

The analysis of innovation in Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) implies understanding how their specific characteristics influence the manifestation of these ways of innovating in their activities. Due to the distinct differences between MSEs and large companies, the approach to innovation must also be adapted.

According to Silveira (2013), the act of innovating is not strictly linked to great discoveries. Innovation, as a factor of competitive differentiation, can be identified in practices to improve processes and services, in the implementation of new management approaches, in the exploration of new markets, in the offer of products and services valued by customers, in the resolution of customer problems, in the search for new market segments, in the search for alternative sources of revenue, in the development of new pricing systems, in the effective interaction with customers and partners, in the collaboration and refinement of the flow of information in the supply chain, and also in the creation of mechanisms such as suggestion programs to encourage the presentation of ideas by employees.

Oliveira (2007) argues that innovation is a long-term investment. Although, initially, innovation and changes may increase risks and uncertainties, reducing the company's efficiency and productivity, success in this process can result in benefits and competitive advantages in the future.

The importance of organizational innovation is highlighted by Lam (2005), challenging the traditional assumption of economists that organizational change is simply a response to technical change. On the contrary, Lam (2005) argues that organizational innovation can be an essential precondition for technical innovation.

According to the OECD (1997), innovation encompasses several activities that are not limited to Research and Development (R&D). This includes the final phases of development for pre-production, production, and distribution, development activities with a lower degree of novelty, support activities such as training and market preparation, as well as activities related to the development and implementation of innovations, such as new marketing methods or new organizational methods, that do not fall into the categories of product or process innovations. Innovation activities may also cover the acquisition of external knowledge or capital goods that are not part of R&D.

Over a given period, a company's innovation activities can be classified into three types:

- Successful, when they result in the implementation of an innovation, even if it is not necessarily commercially successful;
- In progress, when they have not yet resulted in the implementation of an innovation;
- Abandoned before the implementation of the innovation.

As an example, Paredes, Santana and Fell (2014) conducted a case study, using the Innovation Radar (IR), in a small company in the metallurgical sector. Although the authors highlight the lack of consensus on the most appropriate model to measure the degree of innovation of a company, the results revealed considerable improvements through the score attributed to the indicators, demonstrating that the tool used (IR) offers a comprehensive view of the innovation environment.

Exploring this same approach, Torchia, Silva and Bari (2016) examined a small business in the transport sector, with the aim of verifying the presence of innovative activity through the Innovation Radar. Adopting a quantitative perspective, each of the thirteen dimensions analyzed presented three characteristics that made up the fundamental concept of the innovation cycle: i) Business innovation is related to a new value, not just to a new thing; ii) Business innovation takes several forms; iii) Business innovation is systemic. Based on the results obtained, it was found that there was limited use and much to be developed with regard to the innovative activity in this segment.

In the following topic, the importance of a good interpretation of the Innovation Radar in the ALI Productivity will be addressed, describing how it has a crucial role in diagnosis and as a primary tool for change and implementation of internal corrective actions.

3 METHODOLOGY

The work will be in its essence as to its approach, a qualitative research, but it will be necessary in order to compare the results obtained in the TF (final measurement), tabulated information and quantitative data of results and innovation radars collected by the N4 Agents of the Regional Office of Presidente Prudente/SP.

As for the objectives, the article works as a documentary and explanatory analysis, where documents and reports will be observed, in order to explain the results presented by the agents through the field exploration of the problems of the companies.

In order to guide and explain the occurrences, SEBRAE manuals, bibliographic references such as scientific articles, e-books, notes, books, theses and dissertations, Sprints and Innovation Radars brought by Local Innovation Agents – BET N4 Scholarship, inserted in SisALI in cycle 1 of Productivity in 2022, will be used.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As noted, Ali Productivity has as its methodology the search for ways to impact and create philosophies of business improvement, thus aiming at increased productivity, that is, leverage in revenue and/or variable cost cuts. It is important to point out that entrepreneurs are not always able to dedicate themselves to their own created action plans, where they often postpone or give up for various internal reasons.

Below is the list of 10 (ten) companies served by 10 (ten) ALI Agents, guided by their N6 at the SEBRAE Regional Office of Presidente Prudente, which serve 3 regions: Alta Sorocabana, Pontal do Paranapanema and Nova Alta Paulista. These companies have final measurement and were successful in calculating productivity. It should be noted that particularized aspects of each company were disregarded, such as those related to seasonal sales.

Table 1

Positive Productivity Measurements Cycle 1 – ER Presidente Prudente/SP

Agent	Companies	Branch	Problem	Prototyped Solution	Increased Productivity (greater than 15%)	Dimensions of the most deficient Radar
The	VB	Teaching Activities	Lack of leads (Marketing)	Lecture on how to speak on Instagram (Public Speaking Course offered by the company)	64,58%	2 – Innovation Practices; 2 – Management Controls
B	MS	Lighting panels	Difficulty in closing budgets	Institutional video of the company and send it to TV advertising	256,46	1 – Management Controls
C	KT	Paints and materials for painting	Lack of product promotion/ decrease in face-to-face sales	Carry out sales actions through *"live commerce*"	264,46	1 – Management Controls (no defined goals for indicators; no billing data and monthly costs. 1 – ESG (no communication channels).
D	ING	Constructor	Financial problems	Restructure business	296,66	2 – Operations

			(high accounts payable)	processes/hire accountant		Management ; 2 – Innovation Practices
And	GS	Diaper Sale	Low adherence of a diaper brand	Elaboration of a video demonstrating the brand and its benefits	157,38	1 – ESG; 2 – Operations Management ; 2 – Management Controls; 2- Digital Transformation
F	MC	Mini-market	Absence of structured marketing plan	Development of own products with packaging commemorating special dates	211,20	3 – Operations Management ; 3- ESG.
G	DT	Market	Needs to increase customer portfolio	Focus on social media with a posting schedule	198,77	1 – ESG; 2 – Management Controls; 2 – Operations Management ; 2 – Marketing Management ; 2 – Digital Transformation
H	RB	Computer services and sales of electronics and accessories	Problem of visibility, standardization and internal processes	Process Flow Table	73,46	2 – Management Controls; 2 – ESG
I	HR	Feeding	Employee management with checklist of tasks and obligations	Using the *Canva Hapiness Tool*	60,16	1 – Innovation Practices; 1 - ESG
J	SC	Clothing	Lack of planning and assertiveness of purchases	Create defined processes, where the customer chooses the products he will	39,52	1 – Operations Management ; 1 - ESG

				purchase, before purchasing from suppliers		

Source: Author (2025).

By analyzing the table, it is possible to understand that the Innovation Radar is an essential tool for creating internal improvement mechanisms and guiding the Agent's planning. It is possible to observe that the biggest problem concerns ESG and Management Controls.

Table 2

Most deficient dimensions

Companies	Radar Dimension
7/10	ESG
6/10	Management Controls
5/10	Operations Management
3/10	Innovation Practices
1/10	Marketing Management

Source: Author (2025).

From Table 1 it is possible to conclude that most of the companies that managed to adhere to the practices in their deficit areas, obtaining good results in the final measurement of productivity. It is clear that organizations are still unable to establish ESG practices, such as governance and sustainable philosophies, which often tend to generate an initial outlay.

Another point to highlight is the management controls that address aspects related to financial and operational indicators, goal setting, effective inventory control, and cash flow. The difficulty with this dimension is quite considerable, where many end up not having tools that can measure or even report the situation.

Table 3 shows the companies that did not present positive results in the TF (final measurement), worsening their productivity.

Table 3

Negative Productivity Measurements Cycle 1 – ER Presidente Prudente/SP

Agent	Companies	Branch	Problem	Prototyped Solution	Decrease in Productivity by 15% (%)	Dimensions of the most deficient Radar
The	VP	Food	Customer churn (no loyalty)	Post photos and videos of customers in the environment,	-2,56	2 – Marketing Management (does not analyze industry

				on the company's social networks		trends, has no action planning, higher prices than most competitors).
B	AC	Variety store	Low clientele outside the dates considered commercial	Schedule of marketing actions on special dates	-54,26	1 – ESG (does not systematize its communication channels; does not have fast channels such as WhatsApp
C	FA	Maintenance and repair of electronic and optical equipment	Difficulty in attracting customers	CRM system for registration and lead capture	-22,35	1 – Operations Management; 1 – Innovation Practices; 1 – ESG.
D	SP	Water distributor	The company has other niches unknown to most of the clientele	Institutional video demonstrating its products	7,17	3 – Management Controls; 3 – Marketing Management; 3 – Innovation Practices; 3 – Digital Transformation; 3 – ESG.
And	TT	Cargo road transport	Operational problems (delay in arranging fuel payment)	Implement the online notes of gas stations in the system	-64,70	1 – Management Controls; 1 - Operations Management; 1 - Digital Transformation; 1 - ESG
F	BS	Sale of costume jewelry	Absence of relationship marketing	Implementation of loyalty card and regular makeup courses	-81,82	2 – Management Controls
G	DB	Pharmacy	Marketing Need (Disclosure)	Special commemorative date flyer	12,28	1 – ESG; 2 – Digital Transformation
H	MS	Footwear and travel goods	Low sales in e-commerce	Strategic outreach to the website through a	-64,27	3 – Management Controls;

				publication schedule		3 – Marketing Management; 3 - ESG
I	JP	Academy	Lack of organization and disclosure of monthly plans	Preparation of information catalog	1,10	1 – Operations Management; 1 – Innovation Practices
J	PL	Fishing/ Feeding	They use money from another company to pay for their expenses/Mispricing	Variable Cost Control through inventory management (spreadsheet)	-3,67	1 – Management Controls; - Operations Management; - Marketing Management; 1 - ESG

Source: The authors(2025)

It should be noted that the view of this article disregards economic aspects, drop in sales and internal problems of these companies and specific sectors, which are quite common and tend to reflect in the results presented. Another important and large aspect is the non-commitment of some organizations to the Program and consequent non-application of the corrective measures suggested by the ALIs. These aspects guide the non-application of the measures or even non-follow-up or implementation of the ideas observed in the prototype.

In Table 3, it is possible to analyze that many of the problems prioritized by the companies in question do not match the deficiency pointed out in the application of the Radar. Let's look at some clear cases:

Table 4

Deficit dimension x prioritized focus

Enterprise	Deficit Dimension	Prioritized Focus
VP	Marketing Management	Customer churn
AC	ESG	Low clientele on ordinary days
F	Management Controls	Absence of relationship marketing
DB	ESG/Digital Transformation	Marketing Need (Disclosure)

Source: The authors(2025)

Table 4 highlights that despite observing that there are greater deficiencies in other dimensions, companies often tend not to prioritize these bottlenecks, either because they do not observe how much it impacts their productivity or because they do not want to make changes in specific areas (self-indulgence). This data is relevant, since of the sample of the

10 companies with negative results, 4 (40%) did not prioritize corrective actions to a problem that can generate more future benefits.

5 CONCLUSION

The ALI Productivity Program, promoted by SEBRAE, emerges as a strategic initiative to boost innovation and improve the competitiveness of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in Brazil. Its Local Innovation Agents (ALI), trained professionals, play a crucial role in offering expert advice and focus on areas such as management, innovation and technology.

This article proposed an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of the Innovation Radar, an essential tool of the program, in the productive transformation of MSEs served by ALI Productivity. The Radar, originated at MIT and adapted by SEBRAE, is a diagnostic mechanism that covers several dimensions, from management controls to innovation practices, providing a holistic view of the business environment.

By exploring the application of the Radar in cycle 1 of the ALI Productivity, this article sought to understand how the interpretation of this tool can be crucial for success in the final measurement of revenue, costs and productivity. The analysis of the companies served revealed that those that prioritized the most deficient dimensions, such as ESG and Management Controls, were successful in maximizing productivity.

However, it is notable that some companies have not correctly prioritized corrective actions, often not understanding the relationship between certain deficiencies and productivity. The results showed that the implementation of ESG practices and management controls is essential for organizational success, but many companies still face challenges in these aspects.

The analysis of the companies with negative results in the final measurement highlighted a disconnect between the deficit dimensions pointed out by the Radar and the priorities for action chosen by the companies. This discrepancy highlights the need for greater awareness of the importance of certain practices in achieving the desired productivity.

In this context, it is evident that the success of ALI Productivity does not depend only on the quality of the tool used, but also on the understanding and commitment of the companies served. It is imperative that they recognize the importance of areas such as ESG and management controls to promote significant changes in their productivity.

In short, the ALI Productivity Program, combined with the efficient use of the Innovation Radar, can be a catalyst for the positive transformation of MSEs. However, it is critical that

there is an active partnership between ALIs and companies, promoting a deeper understanding of the identified gaps and the effective implementation of action plans.

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