

The Rising Sunset

One day a professor entered the classroom and asked his students to prepare for a surprise test. On their desk was a question paper with the text facing down, as usual. The students turned the page to begin their test. To everyone's surprise, there were no questions, just a black dot in the centre of the page.

The professor, on seeing the expressions on everyone's face, told them, "I want you to write what you see there." The confused students started working on the inexplicable task. At the end of the class, the professor read out each one's answer aloud. All the answers, with no exceptions, described the black dot, explaining its position, size, shade, etc.

After all the answers were read, the professor addressed the class, "I am not going to grade you on this, I just wanted to give you something to think about. No one wrote about the white part of the paper."

The story captures the posture of the corporate world today. COVID-19 is a big black dot for global businesses. That's all we are able to see, act, or strategize on. But, what about the bigger white canvas around the black dot? Don't those empty white spaces present an opportunity to script a new future?

Eventually, COVID-19 will subside. There is no doubt there. This tragic episode, as overpowering as it is, still accounts for only a fleeting moment when compared to the lifetime of most mature businesses. No doubt, in the short run, no one will come out unscathed. However, the impact will be magnified on incompetent companies who may have had a lucky run so far. Then once the world economy bounces back, new opportunities may not go to the incumbents. Instead, they will find their way to efficient organizations. The shakeout will reshuffle the pecking order of many industries.

During sunrise, everyone dazzles. However, during nightfall, only the bright ones continue to glow and show us the way forward!