

Editorial

## Teaching COVID-19's Impact on Businesses



### Aprendizados Sobre o Impacto do COVID-19 nas Organizações

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### A MILESTONE IN OUR HISTORY

The year 2020 will be remembered in History as a year of crisis. A difficult year, full of losses, much inability, and much sorrow. Our special issue about the COVID-19 is an effort to take something good from such devastating times. To reflect about the challenges that we live and what we can learn from them.

During a lecture in 2020, Jared Diamond, author of *Guns, germs and steel* (Diamond, 1999), declared that the coronavirus was not the main challenge of humanity. Instead, the greatest challenges in the planet would be the difficulties when dealing with diversity and inclusion, the unsustainable use of planet resources, and the growing inequality that marginalizes a major share of the global population. From the author's point of view, COVID-19 could maybe help us tackling these problems depending on how we are going to react. We do have this possibility because the crisis resulting from the pandemic has made clear to us all that the borders are ever more fluid, that we live in a single ecosystem, and that everything we do has an impact upon ourselves, but also upon others.

We share this vision. We have realized that, when confronting the need for such a deep transformation, the role of education is absolutely fundamental. A renewed education, that emerges from this crisis without expectation to offer the right

answers. We already know that right answers are not available, yet education should help us make the right questions and reflect about what really matters.

The call for teaching cases resulted from the restlessness that we shared about what the future holds for us and what we could learn from all that happened during the peak of the crisis. We have received 45 good quality submissions. Six months later, the cases that form this special issue show us many relevant dilemmas, unveil uncertainties, and offer new knowledge. In fact, we indeed have learned a lot.

We have learned about the challenges of abrupt acceleration of the home office mode with Chianca Softwares. We have learned about entrepreneurial values and courage with Sorela, Casa Porto, and Wanderlust. We have learned about business reconfiguration and distribution channels with IGT, Pescaria Argo, and Legrias. We have learned that business is evolving around platforms that can connect distinctive groups with Moeda Seeds, Diogo Nogueira, and DocPass. We have learned that such platforms are part of broader ecosystems ever more complex and intertwined with HCFMUSP and Coppead. Finally, we have learned about business ethics in such evolving environments with Magalu and Federal University of Paraíba.

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## ACTION AND REACTION

Each case that is part of this special issue offers a rich reflection on how businesses from various sectors have suffered with the black swan (Taleb, 2007) called COVID-19 pandemic, and how these businesses had to react and adapt to the survival imperative, even in such difficult times.

A large share of cases is focused on small businesses and how they have been particularly affected by the pandemic. The opening case discusses a transformation that has affected to some extent any company: the sudden shift to home office. The case of Chianca Softwares (Alves, Amorim, & Bezerra, 2021) covers the full cycle, starting with the challenges of implementing remote work right when the pandemic stroke and the risks involved were still unveiling, then consolidating the adaptation to home office, and finally reflecting to what extent the exception could offer an opportunity for businesses to rethink their operations permanently. In other words: is it worth to revert work back to presential mode or to consider a hybrid solution in the long run? In the sequence, the case of the star of the stock market in Brazil — Magazine Luiza (Passos, Meneghini, Gama, & Lana, 2021) — shows how empathy, business ethics, and human resources management have become key during the growing curve of contamination, hospitalization, and death due to COVID-19. The case shows that the pandemic has not only pushed business reconfiguration across small firms, but also demanded major adaptations by large corporations.

The four cases that follow highlight the role of the entrepreneur. The Wanderlust case (Pinho, Monteiro, & Binhote, 2021) covers the challenge of a digital entrepreneur focused on tourism facing almost total restriction in the movement of people. How to review the marketing proposition to stay relevant as a tourism business during such a crisis? Then, in the case of Sorela (Erthal & Sacramento, 2021), a young entrepreneur in the business of car selling sees the pandemic as an opportunity to advance on digitalization, a topic so far refracted by his older business partners. Alternatively, maybe even seize the moment of reflection to, grounded on the job crafting logic, experiment in a new born-digital business project? Next, in the Casa Porto case (Vinhas & Lopes, 2021), the entrepreneur needs to tighten the belt, reducing costs, while fighting to keep paying the salaries of the team. Finally, the Facile/Ligferv case (Silva, Guimarães, & Castro, 2021) offers an empirical environment to employ the established theories of causation and effectuation to explain the hurdles of an entrepreneur from Minas Gerais, Brazil, that needs to reinvent the business model of an innovative coffee machine to keep performing under the pandemic.

The next three cases are focused on the reconfiguration of the value chain, from supply management to the choices of distribution channels. The IGT case (Fonseca & Rocha, 2021) deals with a manufacturer and distributor of natural gas converters. How many companies had to suddenly review their plans of expansion, internationalization, and diversification given the COVID-19 situation? The case explores entrepreneurial elements to discuss choices on how to reconfigure the supply chain and to align such decisions with communication to the consumers — in a moment when politics has aggravated the Brazil-China relationship. Similarly, Pescaria Argo (Cavalcanti, Avelar, Amaral, & Freitas, 2021) suffers demand disruption when international borders close. The case explores the financial tools needed to support decision-making and cost management. The identification of relevant costs becomes crucial to plan the path to market and to decide between alternative distribution channels. Closing this lot of cases that focus on business reconfiguration, in the case of Legrias (Silva, Limongi, Gomes, & Pimenta, 2021) we once again see a small business of chocolate manufacturing taken by surprise with the pandemic, reviewing how to assess the costs of different paths to market and distribution costs under high levels of uncertainty.

In the sequence of the special issue, we zoom out to look at platforms and ecosystems. In the case of the musician Diogo Nogueira (Rodrigues, Kamlot, & Carvalho, 2021), the platform framework is used to discuss innovation and reinvention in a sector severely affected by COVID-19: music and entertainment. The reflection about the hurdles of a renowned musician in the Brazilian scenario allows understanding of the properties of digital platforms, such as multi-laterality, network effects, and consumer lock-in potential. In the DocPass case (Moreira, Freitas, Brandão, & Araújo, 2021), we can learn with the audacious movement of the healthcare company Conexa, which already operated in the B2B telemedicine arena, and decides to explore a regulatory shift to fill the gap in the B2C arena by launching DocPass. The case allows a discussion of the network effects in a highly relevant sector in steady expansion. Conversely, in the Moeda Seeds case (Kanegae, Cernev, & Diniz, 2021), the ecosystem framework is used to discuss the challenges of a blockchain-based platform focused on social innovation. The case pushes for a reflection about the role that blockchain can play in impact businesses as well as the challenges of a social entrepreneur trying to revise the positioning of its marketplace, while being sensitive to communicate with vulnerable business partners.

Finally, we learn that complexity is increasing as ecosystems become intertwined with two cases devoted to healthcare and two cases devoted to education — probably the two sectors most affected during the COVID-19

pandemic. The case of the Hospital das Clínicas of the Faculty of Medicine of USP (Pedroso, Pires, Malik, & Pereira, 2021) explores governance adaptation as a response to the crisis, starting with the reconfiguration of production capacity in healthcare, which is considered low on resilience, then moving to the lessons learned during the pandemic that can inform crisis management in the future. The next case addresses the Sistema Indústria (Andrade, Sousa-Filho, Almeida, & Câmara, 2021) which is the industry association organization adapting to support healthcare short-term needs. Managing the complex governance structured that includes seven institutions becomes key to face the crisis. Then, the interesting case of the Federal University of Paraíba (Teixeira-de-Carvalho, Dias, & Bispo, 2021) analyzes teaching virtualization while emphasizing the large-scale challenges of a federal university: calendar management under uncertainty, fragile faculty and students, and the differences between undergraduate and graduate courses. Finally, the invited case about Coppead UFRJ (Campos, Tavares, Chimenti, & Marques, 2021), complements the analysis of teaching virtualization, with

a scenario analysis that allows revisiting an unprecedented crisis as an opportunity for learning and reflection to review teaching methodology in the long term.

## BACK TO THE CLASSROOM

Education is the key to the future. It can help us reframe work, merit, power. It can shed light and ideas onto debates that, one way or another, would be superficial, full of unreasoned uncertainties, or even worse, of lies passing as truth. Our work as educators is enormous. And we need to grow with the occasion.

In this beginning of 2021, we know that we still have a long way to cover on the learning curve. But we are certain that the selection of teaching cases that are part of this issue will support an open debate that a classroom must have to fulfill its mission of questioning, provoking, and educating.

Good debates! Excellent learning! And a much better 2021!

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