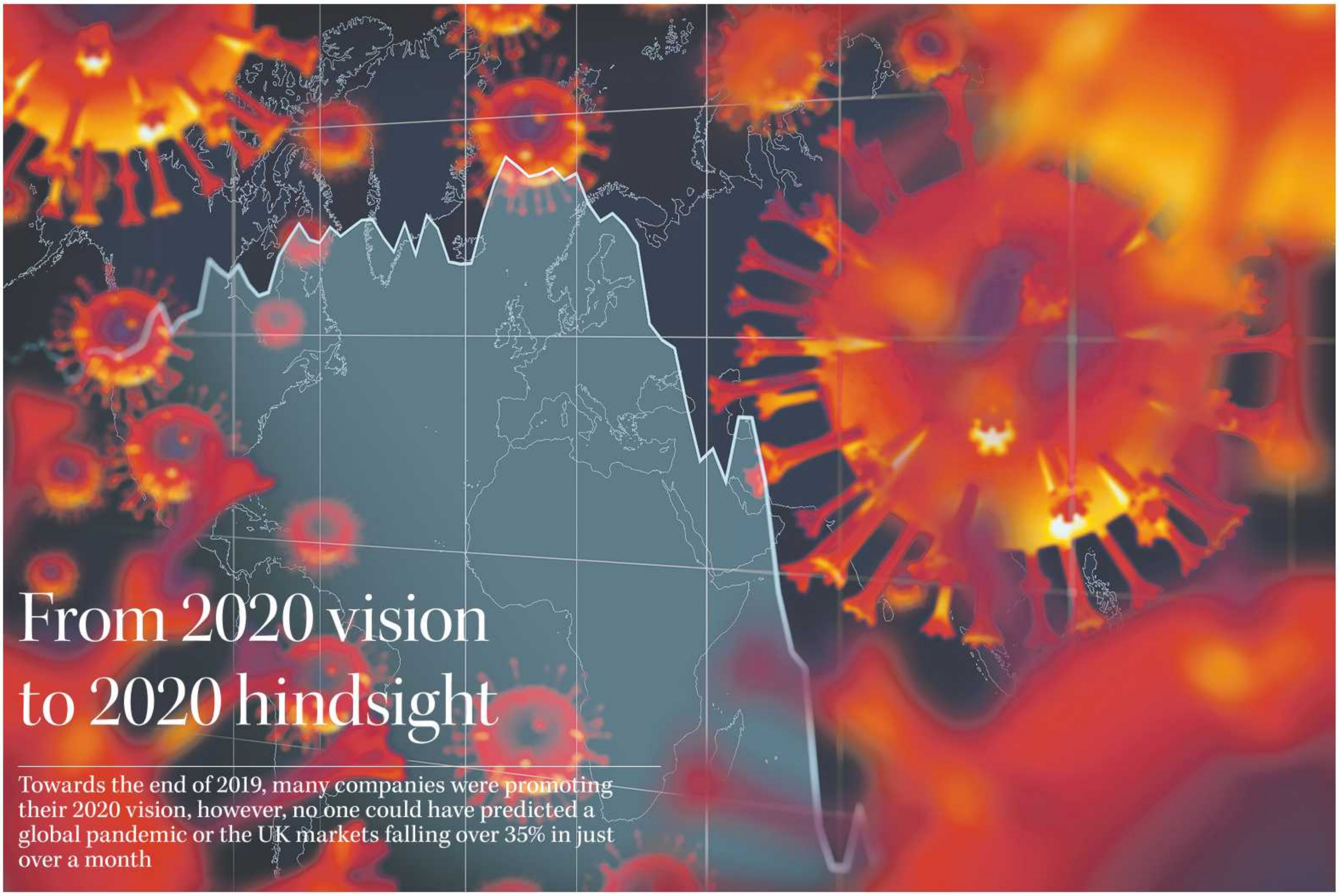

From 2020 vision to 2020 hindsight

Towards the end of 2019, many companies were promoting their 2020 vision, however, no one could have predicted a global pandemic or the UK markets falling over 35% in just over a month

Whether you've been saving for a dream home or planning for your retirement, everyone has been affected by revent events. Interest rates have dropped to 0.1%, resulting in lower returns for savings accounts. Money invested within ISAs, and pension funds have been affected by the volatility in the stock markets.

Historically, we've seen markets moving 5%-10% in a year. Since February, we've seen markets move over 5% in a day, in both directions.

So, what's next for the global stock markets? Can we expect a U- or a V-shaped recovery? Are there further challenges ahead? Which markets will recover the quickest/slowest? The answer is: nobody knows for certain.

History has shown us that markets can recover after a financial crisis. Whether over one month, 12 months or several years, the Financial Crisis, the Tech Bubble, Black Monday, the Oil Crisis and many more examples, have shown us that, given time, markets return to and potentially surpass the level they were before each crisis started.

DGS Chartered Financial Planners look to improve client returns, not just through the investment funds they recommend, but by structured financial planning and cashflow modelling, investing client assets in line with their attitude to risk and objectives, diversified across asset classes. However, not all returns, are driven purely by the investments held and it's important to utilise the tax allowances available such as ISAs, pensions, national savings and capital gains tax allowances.

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This goes hand in hand with trying to ensure assets are held in the most cost-effective way possible to avoid diluting any returns by paying higher charges. It's not uncommon to see annual charges of 2-3% per annum on legacy products, which can significantly affect returns.

With the benefit of hindsight, is there anything that could've been done differently? Here are some questions you may want to consider:

- Do you know where all of your pensions/investments are held?
- Do you know what type of pensions you have and also what features they offer?
- Will they allow you to access your benefits flexibly and retire in the way you'd like to?
- Do you know what costs are levied by the provider/fund managers?
- Do you know what funds your money is invested in? Are they:
  - Active or passive?
  - Cash, fixed interest, property or equities?
  - Invested in the UK or overseas?
  - Socially responsible/ethical?

If you're unable to answer any of these questions, then it is highly recommended that you review your investments and pensions to ensure you hold products that meet your objectives, that you're not paying excess charges and are aware of the risk of the portfolio of funds you hold.

If the markets fall again, how exposed are your assets and how could another significant correction affect your personal and financial objectives? Are there further challenges ahead? No doubt. Can you be better prepared for these challenges? Yes.

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