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Ingen bryr sig om de finska bolagen (Nobody cares about Finnish companies)

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Per Stenius

In this interview with Forum business magazine, Reddal client director Per Stenius compares South Korea and Finland, and how in these countries the emphasis on business growth and renewal differs.

This article originally appeared in Forum business magazine, print issue 8/2020, and is available also in an online abstract (https://www.forummag.fi/ingen-bryr-sig-om-de-finlandska-bolagen).

This article draws parallels between the nations of South Korea and Finland, which are in many ways facing similar challenges, for example an aging population. South Korea, having further progressed along these socioeconomic trends, can therefore serve as a precursor regarding the future for Finland and most European countries. When comparing South Korea and Finland, however, there is a marked difference in the attitude towards the importance of healthy business and growth. This also manifests in how the governments have reacted when facing the COVID-19 pandemic. South Korea is investing strongly into renewal and future growth through a newly established development program focusing on digitization, climate and social safety nets. While these investments will not yield immediate returns, South Korea hopes to emerge stronger from the crisis. Meanwhile, Finland is more focused on short-term troubleshooting and missing the opportunities for renewal.

The article suggests that Finnish businesses and government can learn from how their Korean counterparts are actively working together to drive the country, its industries, and businesses forward. There are also several pitfalls. One is the lack of long-term leadership and commitment of owners and the board to govern a company for future generations. Others include a fragmented ownership base, especially in large companies, as well as a relatively short tenure of CEO’s in their position, which makes it difficult to build long-term

world-leading competitiveness.