

ActivTrades' chief analyst Carlo Alberto De Casa says Sergio Marchionne 's dramatic resignation from Fiat Chrysler has caught everyone by surprise, even insiders at the auto firm.

Loved or hated Marchionne is the man who made FCA as we know it today.

It is difficult to imagine FCA and Ferrari without the man and his unique style.

He wore a sweater rather than the traditional suite and a tie as his every day business attire and with his unconventional leadership style he managed to turnaround one of Italy's biggest – and often most troubled-- industrial realities.

Chosen by Umberto Agnelli on his deathbed, Marchionne took the helm of an almost bankrupt Fiat 14 years ago and turned it into an international powerhouse.

This required sacrifices and controversial decisions, including job cuts and an unpopular 'denationalization' of the company. The relationship between Fiat and Italy, as well as its hometown of Turin, has changed, including from a legal and fiscal point of view, being FCA a Dutch company with fiscal domicile in the UK.

The evolution of the company under its guidance is easily summarised in a few numbers: in 2004 when Marchionne took over, Fiat's revenue was close to €47bn, today it exceeds €140bn. The company profit trebled from €1.5bn in 2004 to €4.4bn in 2017, while the stock market capitalization of the FCA universe spiralled from €5.5bn to €60bn.

After just a weekend to absorb the news markets are now dealing with its consequences. The importance of Marchionne as a leader emerged from the very first minutes after the bell, with FCA, Ferrari and the holding

Exor (all these 3 stocks belongs to the FTSE MIB 40, the main basket of the Italian market) opening with heavy losses. Even more under pressure was Ferrari, where Marchionne's presidency should have continued beyond 2019. But after the initial shock the titles of the Fiat galaxy have started to regain some ground: another sign of Marchionne's talent: he managed to grow Fiat thanks to his personality, but building a future for the company independent from himself. A future that starts with Jeep, one of the brands that grew the most in recent years, from which the new CEO, Brit Michael Manley, comes from.