

TUESDAY 14.08.07

# REPORT ON BUSINESS

↓	↓	↓	↓	↑
<b>S&amp;P/TSX</b> 11,826.44 -39.32 Energy stocks lead first decline in four sessions	<b>DJ Ind.</b> 11,069.06 -46.26 Interest rate worries undermine blue chips	<b>Nasdaq</b> 2,262.96 -19.40 Chip stocks drop as Citigroup cuts recommendation	<b>Dollar</b> 87.18c (U.S.) Unchanged Rate concerns in U.S. and Canada squeeze loonie	<b>Gold</b> \$556.60 (U.S.) +2.00 Renewed inflation concern underpins bullion gain


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## Everything I Needed to Know About Business... I Learned from the Green Lantern



**SEAN WISE**  
WISE WORDS

In today's rapidly changing business environment, inspiration comes from all sorts of interesting places. A quick pre-view of the shelves of the local business bookstore confirms this with titles including:

- Aslett's **Everything I Needed to Know About Business I Learned in the Barnyard**;
- Axelrod's **Everything I Know About Business I Learned from Monopoly**;
- Robert's **Make It So: Leadership Lessons from Star Trek: The Next Generation**;
- Bing's **Sun Tzu Was a Sissy: Conquer Your Enemies, Promote Your Friends, and Wage the Real Art of War** And my favorite, of course:
- Brody's **Everything I Needed to Know about Business I Learned from a Canadian**

So, jumping on the bandwagon, let me present to you, true believer, for the first time ever: **Everything I Know about Business I Learned from the Green Lantern.**



Art by Alex Ross, courtesy and (c) Warner Bros and DC Comics, 2007

**Who is the Green Lantern?**

In 1960, during the dawn of the silver age of comics, DC Comics Editor Julius Swartz set out to revise and update one of his childhood favorites, a superhero named the Green Lantern. In doing so, Swartz helped usher in the second age of superheroes.

The Green Lantern is one of 7200 space patrolmen, a member of the fabled Green Lantern Corps. Each patrolman guards their particular sector of space against evil and injustice. Each answers only to the all-knowing race of blue-skinned aliens dubbed the Guardians of the Universe. Each Lantern is armed only with their quick wit, courage, and an omnipotent weapon of justice called quite sensibly a "power ring".

This ring, powered by the wearer's willpower, can manifest its owner's imagination. With it, the bearer of the ring, (often called "a Ringslinger") can fly, turn invisible and/or immaterial, be telepathic, translate languages, shoot force beams, transmute matter, and can even create hard light holograms in any shape or form (think giant green boxing gloves, shovels and teddy bears). Truth be told, the ring can pretty much do anything, subject to three limitations:

- (1) The ring has difficulty affecting anything colored yellow (n.b. this is due to an impurity in the central power battery that was later overcome);
- (2) The ring can only hold a limited amount of energy (and thus typically needs to be recharged, at a "power battery", every 24 hours); and
- (3) It is only as strong as the possessor's willpower.

It is this last point that truly defines a Green Lantern. To join the Green Lantern Corps, one need only be fearless and possess an incredibly strong will. Personal backgrounds are irrelevant. In fact, the Corps themselves are an interstellar mosaic made up of an almost infinitely assorted menagerie of sentient beings, making it a bastion of diversification.

**Why Does He Matter?**

For me, the Green Lantern has always shown that with wisdom (knowing what needs to be done) and willpower (the dedication one needs to do what is needed) altering reality is possible.

This isn't just a comic book fantasy - athletes around the world have testified to the power of visualization. Michael Jordan saw the shot before he took it. Wayne Gretzky saw the winning goal before it left his stick. Carl Lewis imagined breaking the 100m world record before he crossed the finish line. These athletes claim that by visualizing the outcome they desire and willing it to be, they are actually able to increase the probability of that outcome occurring proving

the power of visualization.

In her 2006 bestseller - The Secret, Rhonda Byrne dubbed this theory "**the Law of Attraction**". Well, this theory is not a revolutionary one - the idea that positive thoughts introduced into reality can lead to positive outcomes dates back thousands of years. In fact, Buddha stated, "*What you have become is the result of what you have thought.*" It can be found in beliefs as ancient as Hinduism. More contemporary thinkers believe that this may be more than a simple theory and can actually be traced back to the scientific principles that underlie Quantum Physics. Evidence lacking aside, there is some merit in visualizing your desired outcome prior to pursuing it. After all, if you can't believe it, how can you be ready to receive it?

The other aspect of the Green Lantern that always fascinated me was the fact that each member of the Corps had to be fearless. As a child, I thought that meant our heroes were "without fear", almost as if nothing caused them anxiety or trepidation. But more recently, the stories of these Emerald Warriors have shown, at least to me, that when it comes to being fearless, one needs to seek a deeper meaning. This is best described by paraphrasing Ambrose Redmoon:

*To be fearless is not to be without fear; it is to understand fear, to know fear, and to continue on in spite of and in the face of what you fear.*

**What Can You Learn from the Green Lantern?**

**Lesson 1: Be Fearless**

Everyone fears something. Some fears, like agoraphobia (the fear of being unable to escape a situation) are seemingly irrational and may be the result of childhood trauma or insecure attachment. These sorts of fears are better left to the therapist. Instead, I want to deal with the other type of fear - the fear that prevents you from pursuing tasks you know you should. For example: speaking up at a meeting, asking for a raise, or agreeing to lead your team.

Let me be clear on this, in my mind at least, there is nothing wrong with being afraid, but there is something wrong with letting that fear prevent you from pursuing what you know is right. Fear has its place (ex. it is appropriate to be afraid of putting your head in a lion's mouth), but you have to decide how much control over your actions you want that fear to hold over you.

Use the example of Green Lantern to know your fear and to overcome your fear by undertaking the following exercise.

- What is it that you want to do?
- What do you fear that prevents you from doing it?
- Where does that fear come from?
- How else, other than facing it head on, can you overcome it?

**Lesson 2: Wisdom + Willpower = Results**

Everyone wants a better life, world, and/or job. Few know how to get what they desire. The Green Lantern teaches us that to shape your reality, you need two things:

- Wisdom – knowing what you need to do
- Willpower – having the courage to do what is needed

Let's say you want to lose weight:

**Step 1:** Understand how one loses weight, i.e. you lose weight when the calories you burn exceed the calories you intake. Understand that you thus have to either lower your calorie intake (i.e. cut out sweets) or increase the calories your burn, (i.e. exercise more.)

However, knowing what you need to do to lose weight isn't enough; you need to then have the determination, the dedication, and the willpower to follow through. Thus you need:

**Step 2:** Have the willpower to follow through, each and every day, exercising regularly and monitoring your calories throughout. Have the courage to stick to your plan, even though it is hard.

So as you can see, knowing what to do is not enough, you need to have the willpower to pursue your plan and the dedication to keep at it. This is true if what you want is a promotion, a capital infusion to grow your business or to lose your beer belly.

**Lesson 3: Remember to Recharge Your Battery**

The Green Lantern shows us that even the most powerful tool in the universe has its limits. The same is true with our most powerful personal tool, our brain. No matter who you are, or what you do, everyone needs downtime.

For some this can be a simple nap, while for others it can be a weekend at the cottage. Regardless of what it is for you, you need to schedule regular breaks from your duties, or you risk running out of power when you need it most.

Seems like a simple lesson, yes? Yet, many high performing executives routinely suffer from burnout, the epitome of running out of energy.

Among the high-performing CEOs I've had the pleasure to work with, this issue is a real one. Notwithstanding, there really is no excuse for it. After all, what is the point of winning the battle while losing the war? Yet, time and time again, I find these business superstars exhausted. When I discuss the need for balance with them, almost to a man, they come back with the same reasoning: "I'm

too busy to rest" or "there is way too much to get done." My simple, yet effective response to this has always been: "Isn't that like saying 'I'm too busy driving to get gas?'"

**Lesson 4: Strength Through Diversity**

Years ago, the Guardians of the Universe (and Editor Julius Swartz in the '60s) espoused a fundamental truth in the universe: through diversity comes strength. Both utilized this fact to make the Green Lantern Corps the strongest force of good in the universe by filling its ranks with beings from all walks of life (and origins). Over the years, the GL Corps' 7200 members have included: a talking squirrel, a living robot, a being made of plant life, and even a sentient planet.

While managers of earth-bound teams may not have the ability to hire such (but who wouldn't want a planet on their team?), they do have the ability to stack their teams from all walks of life and backgrounds and by doing so, will add incredible variety and inspire creativity.

**Lesson 5: Everyone Has a Boss**

Bob Dylan said it best: You're gonna have to serve somebody. All Green Lanterns report to the Guardians of the Universe, so even while the individual patrolmen have high autonomy, in the end they each have a boss to report to.

The same is true in business. CEOs report to the Board of Directors, entrepreneurs report to their clients, etc. One needs to therefore understand one's boss before undertaking their mission. So every hero (business or super) needs to know four things:

- (1) Who is their true boss?
- (2) What is their bosses' end goal?
- (3) How do they affect that goal?
- (4) What do they need to do to further that goal?

Try keeping these points in mind, or risk exposing yourself to the wrath of your "true boss".

**Green Lantern of the Real World**

To me, Richard Branson is the Green Lantern of our world. Here is a man, who through the sheer force of his will created an empire. He dropped out of school at an early age and began shaping his world through business. First through the magazine "Student", then through Virgin Records followed by Virgin Atlantic; his creations now include more than 200 companies operating under the Virgin Brand.

On the question of fearlessness, he is equally qualified having traversed both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans in a hot air balloon. Trips which almost cost him his life on several occasions, yet he did not stop until he finished what he started.

On the issue of willpower, William Whitehorn, a senior

Virgin executive (currently President of Virgin Galactic, Branson's latest venture whose goal is to make space travel commercial) said it best about Branson: "When the chips are really down, his determination grows exponentially."

**The Bottom Line:**

Today, business lessons can be found in many sources, each imbuing its own sense of wisdom and teachings. But if you want to be a hero (super or business), I recommend looking to my childhood favorite, the Green Lantern. I hope that in doing so, you glean the following lessons:

- Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the decision to pursue something more important than fear
- Wisdom + Willpower = Results
- Always make time to recharge your power source
- Be open to diversity
- Know your boss

Doing so may not necessarily make you look good in tights, but it should help in your annual review, even if your bosses aren't tiny blue aliens.

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Sean speaks at more than 20 Entrepreneurial Boot-camps and events across North America annually. Sean is the online host and industry advisor for CBC's hit business reality show [www.INSIDetheDRAGONSden.com](http://www.INSIDetheDRAGONSden.com)

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