

Ready for a new spirit?

An excursion into the world of business shamans

The Christmas season is often also a spiritual time. Many people grow more contemplative during this time of the year. In line with this, we embark on a special journey into the world of business shamans – yes, you heard right: shamans. After all, spiritual practices are ubiquitous in many cultures and an excursion into the parallel world can also be worthwhile in business. Belief in spirits is not a prerequisite for success, only the openness to engage in new practices and to strengthen the team spirit of the company with the help of the elements fire, earth, water and air. *By Carina El-Nomany*

Shamans or medicine men and women exist in almost all cultures of the world, South America, North America, Siberia, Mongolia, Africa, Asia and Australia. There are of course great differences, but in essence a shaman wants to contact a world behind the world (otherworld) to solve problems in the world we live in.

These can be personal, spiritual, health, social and corporate problems. A shaman is always seeking answers for this world in a spiritual world.

If we look at the continents where there are shamans and medicine men and women, it is noticeable that Europe is not mentioned here.

The dilemma of shamanism in Europe

Many western countries in Europe had a well-developed culture of healers until the 8th century, which was almost completely lost with Christianization. Witch hunts and the commandment “Thou shalt have no other gods besides me” led to eradication and oblivion of natural access to ancient wisdom.

Slowly, a neo-shamanism is developing in Europe. Many people remember their original healing powers, draw on the knowledge of other healing cultures, get trained by shamans on other continents or visit corresponding healing schools. When you look on LinkedIn or Facebook, there are now many energy coaches, spiritual coaches and the like.

Many people only dare to openly profess to be a healer or a shaman in an already spiritual environment. Behind this lies a great fear of being seen as untrustworthy, of being declared an “esoteric nutcase” and of no longer obtaining commissions. Of course, this feeds the conviction that shamanism is dubious.

New consciousness in business

Nevertheless, approaches to a new consciousness are also clearly visible in the business world. Mindfulness seminars and meditations in workshops, profound leadership training that extends beyond purely intellectual developments, new forms of

collaboration, etc., are clear signs of the deep need for meaningful action, new forms of community in cooperation, a healthy work environment and, above all, a more proactive approach to feelings and a slow end to a business world that acts purely factually and with little humanity.

Corporate management is increasingly recognizing that the old methods no longer go far enough and fast enough. The willingness to take a completely new and unusual approach is therefore growing fast. So far, so good.

What is a business shaman?

In Europe, the scene of healers who profess to work also in business is only very slowly emerging – see the reasons mentioned above. However, those who are fully committed to their vocation are very successful and in demand.

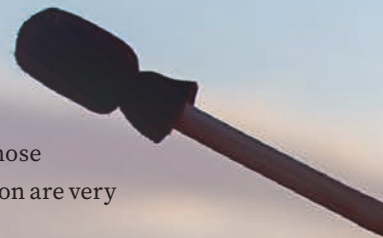
As a rule, business shamans initially come from the business world, they were consultants, CEOs and executives themselves for a long time, among other things, and mostly came to the vocation of healer/shaman through a personal crisis, a near-death experience or an inner need.

In addition to their studies and business training, they have a long initiation path (at least eight years or more) as healers under their belt and now combine their experience from business life with their vocation as healers.

Their task is mostly to connect the worlds – in methodology as well. Working with the rattle, drum or incense would possibly scare one or the other client in the company at the beginning. So the way to build trust is mostly through classic process work, analyses, conversations and workshops.

A business shaman knows business, works for business and combines classical methods with the healing work of shamans. He knows PowerPoint and drum!

Team-buildings and outdoor trainings have certainly made a significant contribution to increasing the openness for even more unusual and courageous paths. Working with a business



shaman takes courage, it challenges and can be rewarded with small and big miracles.

Thus, CEOs and corporate executives are increasingly opting for fire rituals, more profound teambuilding in nature, healing old wounds in the team and in the company, and also clearing the way internally for the future. As pattern breakers, teambuilding and outdoor training have paved the way for unusual settings even in large companies.

Old workshop methods reach their limits

A business shaman creates a sacred space that can be felt by everyone. In doing so, he is not proselytizing – no one has to believe in anything, but is invited to just get involved for a moment – a shared “spirit” is created precisely through spirit. In this space, truthfulness, reverence, respect, humility, strength and connection emerge. Through this, tough issues can finally be “redeemed”.

Shamanic work thus goes beyond other team building methods. The fire ritual, for example, has a special magic for teams. Magic here refers to a transformation that cannot be explained in secular terms, but that can be experienced and the effect of which often manifests in new ways of thinking and behaving.

The term also includes the techniques and rituals that a shaman uses to initiate this transformation, such as the above mentioned use of rattle, drum and ritual.

The fire ritual

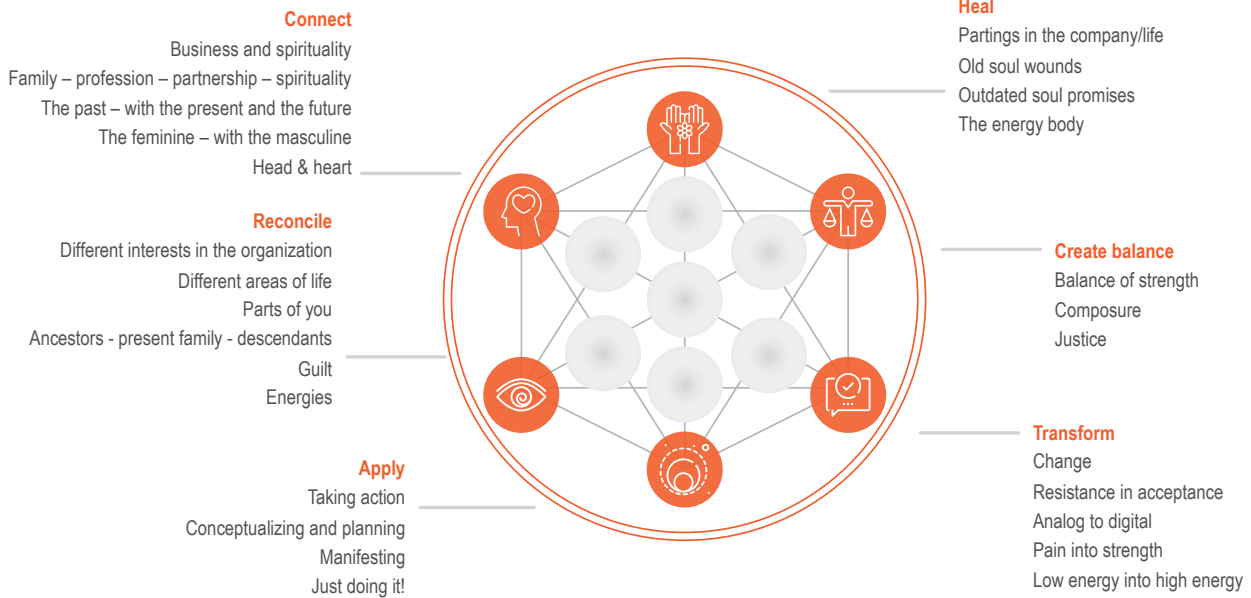
In a fire ritual, the participants gather in a circle around the fire. The circle stands for infinity because it has no beginning and no end. In the circle, moreover, everyone is equal and everyone can see everyone else. It is a symbol of a strong community.

The shaman opens the sacred space with a prayer and includes the present situation and the participants in it. Supporting forces from all directions and times are called upon and the participants are reminded that they are the connecting element between the generations before and after them – including in the company.

The element fire stands for the fastest transformation element. Within seconds, it transforms an object into ashes and smoke – that is, another state. This symbolism and transformational power of fire is applied in the fire ritual to aspects in the team, in the company or also for personal changes.

For example, as part of a fire ritual for a team, the manager or the eldest and the youngest member of the team step up to the fire at the beginning and, e.g. in the form of flipcharts, metaplan cards or post-its that have been worked out beforehand, put everything into the fire that the team would like to avoid in the future. In particular, things that can no longer be changed, but which have generated a lot of resistance. In

A shaman is a wanderer between the "real" world we live in and the world of spirits. Through his initiation path, he receives permission to work with "good spirits" and the elements such as fire, earth, water, air, and call them to assist in healing work. He is granted access to hidden wisdoms and energies. He appeases the (natural) forces through prayers and rituals and reconnects people to something "greater". Sacred geometry, such as the circle, the spiral, etc., contributes to the magic and power.



Overview of the work of a business shaman

this case, the resistance is given into the fire. Old, destructive behaviors, outdated rules or outdated structures can also be put into the fire. The crucial thing is the common intention “to want to let it go” and to seal this by the act at the fire.

Then, symbolically, the team takes out of the fire what they would like to see in the future – new rules, processes, agreements, visions, and more.

After this act is completed for the whole team, everyone steps up to the fire individually and repeats it for their individual goals – letting go what they want to avoid in the future and taking what they want to implement in the team – new attitudes, behaviors, projects, resources such as courage, skill, composure, etc. After everyone has stepped up to the fire, the “sacred space” is closed again.

The fire ritual is a ceremonial act that seals what was previously discussed and strengthens the shared intention and alignment for change within the team.

This example shows that healing rituals in business can address issues that simply cannot be raised in a purely conversational circle.

Selected examples from my practice

It does take courage for a client to invite a business shaman to facilitate a workshop. But those who get beyond this point will be rewarded. Especially in the business world, healing and reconnecting with nature offer opportunities for the great tasks of the future and a new way of working together. So it is worthwhile to dare trying. In the worst case, everything remains as it is. In the best case, miracles happen.

From average department to transformation engine for innovation and agility in the company in two days.

A marketing department is considered as sleepy in the company. Through a shared ritual, the employees' old ideas, inertia and fears are discarded and a collective vision is developed in a special setting (sacred space); old wounds are healed. Even the most conservative forces in the team join in.

Just four months after the workshop, the department is seen as a transformation engine for innovation and agility in the company and receives a standing ovation from global managers for projects and the new way of working.

Business shamans are guides to a more humane business world that connects people to each other, but also to future generations, nature, and a higher calling, beyond mere business success.

Parting with the "unchangeable"

A works council has not been able to prevent the sale of parts of the company. Many longstanding members of the council experienced this as a personal failure. At the same time, this works council had to take up a strong position in the remaining company, with the new owner. A two-day workshop was therefore held to discuss its realignment.

The sale of parts of the company and the separation from part of the workforce was perceived as a trauma by the board. There was no energy for shaping the future. All contributions and thoughts were focused on what could no longer be changed.

In the first part of the workshop, the participants worked out,

1. what needs to be said goodbye to in the long run; what can no longer be changed, but still costs energy,
2. the things they can have a concrete influence on, and
3. the aspects they could immediately decide for themselves.

At the end of the first day, the participants "said goodbye" to everything and placed in the fire what could no longer be changed, even grief had its place. At the same time, the strength and confidence to shape the new framework was taken from the fire.

Only then, on the second day of the workshop, were all participants able to focus on the new role of the works council in the company and develop a powerful strategy.

What else can a shaman do for a business?

Some examples:

- ▶ Parting with old patterns of behavior and old narratives around the fire
- ▶ Reaffirming commitments around the fire
- ▶ Appreciation of company history and transfer of challenges and painful experiences as a heroes' tale – what have we learned from the painful experiences and what is to be done with them?
- ▶ Far-reaching change of perspective – e.g. from the point of view of previous generations and future generations
- ▶ Developing (modern) rituals that suit you to appropriately "initiate" people into new functions and positions, or to say goodbye to people in a dignified way
- ▶ Creating a space where forgiveness is possible, where wounds or disappointments (farewells from deceptions) can "heal" as well
- ▶ Cleansing your corporate space
- ▶ A hero's essence journey with your team or for you personally
- ▶ Personal healing rituals
- ▶ And much more



A business shaman generally combines the most diverse and at first glance perhaps incongruous aspects, he creates balances, harmonizes, heals, helps to transform and implement. Preliminary talks and a thorough clarification of the assignment are of course also part of the service of a business shaman. Regardless of what tasks the business shaman is faced with, it is always important to assess what the team or the management can be expected to tolerate in terms of "open magic". Magic also works discreetly in the background but sometimes an open challenge is just the right thing to break up patterns. Experience shows that executives in high positions of responsibility in particular are aware of their limitations and are increasingly willing to take unusual paths in order to achieve great things. This occasionally requires the courage to embark on something completely unknown. ♦



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Carina El-Nomany is a business shaman, coach and book author. She has been a successful change management consultant for over 25 years. She is the mother of three sons and has walked an intense personal development path. Carina is a trained shaman. Her journey has taken her to the USA, Peru, Sweden and Germany. Shamans and healers like Alberto Villoldo, Ralph Metzner, Angaangagaq Angaakorsuaq, LaraMarie Obermeyer, Michael Hemme, Juan Alvarez, LuzClara Camus and many others have accompanied her along the way. Among other things, she is the author of the book "Die Essenz der Heldenreise Leben" and offers seminars and individual coaching. Her intention is to provide teams and leaders with profound support in change processes and to help create an environment in which people are appreciated and supported in their power.