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NEWS REVIEW

## Prince Harry's new job: what is a chief impact officer?

The role of a 'chimpo' might sound daft but US companies love a silly name

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Harry: chief impact officer  
JEFF MOORE/SPLASHNEWS

The Duke of Sussex has railed against the loss of royal titles and privileges since he quit “the Firm”, but last week he got two new jobs. Harry is now chief impact officer (or Chimpo) of the life coaching and mental health company BetterUp. Soon after that he was unveiled as a commissioner on information disorder (Cido) for the Aspen Institute, a US think tank.

Tesla's Elon Musk refers to himself as “technoking” of the company he founded, and his chief financial officer as “master of coin”, but when it comes to US corporate “wokabulary”, Harry's new titles take the crown. You can see why BetterUp's boss, Alexi Robichaux, felt he had to make Harry a chief. By rights, though, as it's his first office job, shouldn't he be working all hours, making the tea and hoovering up any nuggets of wisdom from old hands? He's certainly got the right look for it: his favoured skinny light grey suit makes him look as if he's off for his first day in telesales.

What will Harry actually do in his role at BetterUp? So far, he has only offered a few platitudes about “lifting up critical dialogues around mental health”. One man who can help to explain why he’s been hired is Anthony Painter, who became Chimpo at the Royal Society of Arts in London in 2019.

Painter, 46, says — in a not entirely jargon-free explanation — that the role involves devising and drilling down to the essence of any organisation and ensuring it delivers or “impacts” precisely that to customers, shareholders, partners, stakeholders and fundraisers. “It’s about saying, ‘This is who we are, what we do, and we’re determined to be held accountable’.”

Carmen Romero, the Chimpo at Planet Smart City, a London company that designs and builds affordable smart housing, says her role “demonstrates a business is mindful of its actions. It’s a visionary way to get people engaged and excited. We’re not talking about philanthropy; we’re talking about for-profit companies. Capitalism when it’s mindful is amazing. It transforms people’s lives.”

Both she and Painter think Harry’s track record — particularly in promoting the Invictus Games — shows he has what it takes to create a modern values-based business and promote it worldwide. “Creating anything that attracts a big following, let alone something with global reach, marketing, investment, TV rights, is hard,” Painter says.

If that’s what BetterUp is after, Harry is earning his princely sum already. Overnight he has put the San Francisco outfit on the map. Few people had heard of it before Wednesday. Now the whole world has, which is sure to drive demand for its life-coaching app, which costs £2,600 a year.

So what about a Cido, another glorious dip into title tombola? “Today’s digital world has us inundated with an avalanche of misinformation,” says Harry. “This is a humanitarian issue. It demands a multi-stakeholder response from advocacy voices, members of the media, academic researchers, and both government and civil society leaders.”

Put rather more simply, it means he will use his experience of battling against what he sees as media misrepresentation to help others tackle damaging “fake news”.

But just because new-fangled jobs sound silly, that doesn’t mean they’re not useful or relevant in the modern world of work. To attract a broader range of new recruits and better serve customers, most firms have appointed a chief diversity officer. Even the Queen is planning to hire one. Other new roles more than likely coming our way across the Atlantic include chief happiness officer, data ethnographer and mood manager.

Allyson Stewart-Allen, a marketer and the author of *Working with Americans*, explains: “The reason for the creative naming of corporate roles is to celebrate the jobholder’s uniqueness and individualism, which is a core value in US business culture.”

So what’s next for Harry? Mindfulness Sherpa? Purpose pivoteer? Global head of truth(s)? It’s surely only a matter of time.