

# Most Inspiring HR Leader of the Year

**Winner**

**Kelly Hartman,  
Chipper Cash**



This category recognises senior leaders within HR / Wellbeing / D&I who have led from the front to banish stigma around mental health, and who have campaigned to ensure colleagues are supported

 Kel joined Chipper Cash in November 2021 as its Chief People Officer. Chipper is a financial technology company that facilitates cross-border payments in Europe and Africa.

Kel is passionate about empowering both employees and the business to reach their full potential. She has more than 25 years of experience in organization development, cultural change, wellness, talent management and acquisition, executive learning and development, remuneration, succession planning and employee relations.

A true global citizen, Kel has worked all over the world, including Australia, Canada, Africa, Europe, Central America, the Caribbean, Asia and the United States, and has traveled to almost 100 countries. She is a qualified executive coach, has raised more than \$20,000 for charity through two photography exhibitions, helped implement an NGO in West Africa, and written and performed her own play.

Upon joining Chipper, Kel recognised that the people at Chipper needed someone to listen to them. They needed support, having worked remotely for so long, and she focused on them as people. Kel can make anyone feel special, and people opened up to her. She transformed the culture to make it “people first” – caring, inclusive, empathetic, open. People feel



Kel has transformed Chipper’s culture to make it “people first”

cared for and are stepping out of their comfort zone and connecting with people from all over the world, resulting in better collaboration. Some have expressed their awe at the cultural changes.

## Changing mindsets

The most significant impact of Kel’s work has been on the vulnerability and courage of others to share their stories around mental health openly. It is the culture change and mindset shift that’s profound. Many individuals from Africa

are leading the way to champion Chipper's initiatives around mental health and lead ERG groups, despite it being considered a taboo topic in their culture. Of those receiving wellness coaching, 75% are from Africa, which is incredible since this is not the norm in their culture. No less than 90 per cent are referrals, which reflects their bravery and courage in reaching out to Kel to seek help.

After starting the Women at Chipper employee resource group and running a series of Within Her Power workshops, Chipper saw an increase in confidence across its female employees as they started to volunteer to speak on panels and at live events. There is a core team of women who work on the initiatives for Women at Chipper. The connections fostered in this pod have helped drive collaboration on initiatives.

Kel has played a key role in enacting a range of policies designed to care for employees' mental health. These include: Chipper's compassionate leave policy; Chipping Into Me, which seeks truth and gets people to be their authentic self; a comprehensive wellness programme incorporating monthly events, a home stipend and employee resource groups; and a parent programme that Kel started despite having no children of her own, demonstrating her empathy, understanding and thoughtfulness.

Kel brought in 20 psychologists to address employee mental health. African employees tend not to talk about mental health or seek support but they have been the ones using the service most, and have reported an 85% improvement in their overall mental health.

She created a group of predominantly African men who did not really talk about their emotions – they opened up, shared, and connected to one another because Kel was attuned to this need. One person said he was suicidal and had lost a baby, and Kel was the first person he spoke to about these issues – she was there to listen and help him get professional support.

None of this work would have been possible without Kel and her desire to listen, solicit feedback and incorporate it into the work. ■



➤ **Huge initial impact on the organisation. Lots of innovative ideas which have achieved strong buy-in and support.**

➤ **Kelly has managed to successfully engage with harder to reach groups, challenging cultural norms and enabling people to reach out and get support through wellness coaching and monthly wellness events, alongside securing a wellness budget.**

## Highly Commended

➔ Mellener Anne Coelho

**NORTHERN TRUST**



## Shortlisted

➔ Carolyn Cole

**CONSTRUCTION TESTING SOLUTIONS**

➔ Ryan Hopkins

**FINASTRA**

