

The Human Conversation

Podcast Newsletter



Get To Know Our Guest

**SUSAN
CAESAR**

Susan Caesar is a strategist, storyteller, and systems leader working at the intersection of artificial intelligence, human development, and the living world.

*She serves as the **Director of Artificial Intelligence at the International Coaching Federation (ICF)**, where she leads the responsible integration of AI across a global community of more than 60,000 coaches. Susan guides ICF's AI strategy for 2026 and beyond, ensuring that emerging technologies strengthen human capability, elevate professional standards, and uphold the dignity, agency, and wellbeing of people worldwide.*

*Susan is also **the Founder of humain.org**, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit advancing life-centered leadership and innovation. Her work at Humain.org champions two core commitments: women leading with life and innovation that regenerates the natural world. Through applied research, thought leadership, and cross sector partnerships spanning technology and conservation, she is helping to redefine progress in service of both humanity and the planet.*

*She hosts the humainorg podcast, a storytelling platform featuring global voices who are reimagining how technology, nature, and society can flourish together. **As a writer and speaker, Susan explores ethical innovation, regenerative futures, and the cultural transformations needed to usher in a truly life centered era.***

*In addition, Susan is the **co-founder of the Lead With Purpose movement**, created with Donna Potts McKenzie, which delivers leadership programs for community colleges (including Harper College) and future-of-work pathways for organizations navigating rapid transformation.*

*Across her work in strategy, storytelling, and systems change, **Susan's purpose is clear: to help people, organizations, and technologies lead with wisdom, so that human potential, innovation, and the living planet can thrive together.***

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HIGHLIGHTS & TAKEAWAYS

- **KG:** You've had such an interesting career, customer experience, digital transformation, AI, as a corporate executive, advisor, thought leader, podcaster, to name just a few. *Is there a red thread that ties all of it together for you? I want to know what's the driving force behind all that you do?*
- **SUSAN:** *If I look back when I was a child, I felt that everybody should be having the same opportunities. For me that as a child, I was going, why I want to have equity, equality. So that was a driving force. I think the driving force for me has been around that is people centric, something about treating people equally and with respect and also emotion.*
- **SUSAN:** *Emotion is at the root of action. How we feel affects what we believe and what we then do. I went from being a creative into being operational. I ran customer and employee operations and I was using technology in a way that gave people better experiences to create the environment and the interactions that created positive emotions because if you've got happy customers and happy staff, then you've got a more profitable business. I learned that life and business is all about relationships. And I'm committed to making business and society more humane.*
- **SUSAN:** I still don't feel that we have equity or equal opportunities for people. That's why I advocate for DEIB. I'm really passionate about having diversity in the room because actually it's better for decision-making. The more diverse people and ideas that you have and voices, the stronger the solutions. Actually there's a good reason why I care about that.



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- **KG:** *What makes you believe so strongly that concepts like equity, emotional intelligence, human-centered design, why do you believe they're so important and to be at the core of all these transformational things that are happening around us?*
- **SUSAN:** *My career has been around that intersection between people and whatever the emerging technology is and using that in a way, because I've worked in global organizations. It's been about how you leverage that intersection of human connection and technology to do the right thing by customers, employees at scale. And when I think about ethics and integrity in that space, it is all about honoring our shared humanity. When we are thinking about making changes in organizations or deploying these technologies, it should be there to serve the people. It should be there to add more value to what the purpose of that organization is and what the customers or the citizens that they're serving, how they get more of what they're expecting from that organization.*
- **SUSAN:** *I think part of the red thread for me is about ethics and integrity helps us deploy things or make decisions that are good for humanity. I think also acting with empathy, honesty and respect should be happening in every relationship. In every moment I used to talk about when in organizations like every decision, every transaction should be supporting and reinforcing the brand values of that organization. And in the wider context, it should be supporting and reinforcing empathy, honesty and respect, dignity for people.*
- **KG:** *Do you feel that it is feasible for business leaders, brand managers, product managers, innovators of the world to be able to prioritize human dignity, human rights, concepts like these as they are looking at some of the tough trade-offs today, breakthrough innovations, scaling up profitability, shareholder value?*



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- **SUSAN:** *I think they have to end that the tide is turning. I think if you think about it right now, I believe in 2025, we have become disconnected from ourselves, disconnected from each other and disconnected from the world that we live in. There's lots of data points to evidence why that statement might be true. If you think about how we've lost trust in all of the institutions, how we, you know, the level of need for wellbeing. Then if you think about the planet, just all of the indices that we track to show how we are treating the world that we live in and the other creatures that we share the world with. I think there's a lot of evidence to say that we need to change.*
- **SUSAN:** *I think with AI coming, I think there is the opportunity to change because now we're going to be able to, I think leaders need to be standing back and really thinking about the long-term sustainability of their organization and how it is treating its people and the world because the younger generations are going to ask those questions.*
- **SUSAN:** *I think it is possible, I think it is happening. I personally am advocating for that in my organization, Humane Org. For me, it's all about helping women leaders, advocating for them, and then helping leaders make choices that are good for the people that work with them, the societies and the communities they're part of and ultimately what we're doing to our planet.*
- **KG:** *In all of your experiences, has there been one that jumps out in your mind that challenged your sense of ethics and integrity. If you could share something and what you learned from that experience because I think it will shine a light for others who are similarly grappling with ethical dilemmas and asking themselves, can I survive this by doing the right thing?*



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- **SUSAN:** *In the beginning of my career, women weren't treated fairly, I don't think, and I experienced that. And then more laterally, think organizations really have grown so big and hierarchical and it really doesn't fit what the world needs today. And COVID was a good example of that, how we had to completely pivot what organizations are. Anyway, through all of that, I've chosen not to work in a corporate now. I work for ICF, the International Coaching Federation, and I am helping that organization elevate coaching because I believe coaching is a way to help the future.*
- **SUSAN:** *I've worked in the tech industry and that's often been the first place that layoffs happen. And I mean, I've had to do it or I've done it because I've been a leader in those organizations. I've understood why the business needed to do it. However, **the effects that that have has on people, their livelihoods, the families that they have, the communities that they're part of. I found that a difficult ethical dilemma. And it therefore shaped my conviction that we can and must do business differently. And that's why I've set up Humane Org. It is human centered leadership.***
- **SUSAN:** *I'm here because I believe coaching in every walk of life, if people have access to coaching, then it helps us be better people, better leaders. And therefore it's the ripple effects of what that can do in society. That's the consequence of my ethical dilemmas. I believe I'm in a much better space now and feel I'm in flow as a person and I hope to influence other people in those spaces so that they can help organisations heal.*

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- **KG:** *As an expert on responsible, humane AI, what are your observations on real world ethical dilemmas most relevant today? And what would your advice be to professionals grappling with such situations?*
- **SUSAN:** *I think at the moment we have a power imbalance and I believe that will get resolved. But right now you've got the power of a few impacting the many. I don't see the influences, the governments could be influencing this, but they are not at the moment, but I think there are some signs, some signals that are changing.*
- **SUSAN:** *I mentioned the breakdown of trust, and this is in many aspects of our lives. And, you know, the fact that we, whether it's in a business as lead or in organizations and leaders, whether you're a leader in a community or educational establishment or a business, you're faced with perpetual volatility at the moment and complexity. And we as consumers also feel that. We feel there's a need to act.*
- **SUSAN:** *I advise leaders to help themselves with this. Hire a coach. If you haven't got a coach in your life right now, I would advocate for getting one. I believe coaching is really a human practice. And so you may be using AI tools to spar on ideas around your goals, your life, et cetera, but that is not the same experience as working with a coach.*
- **SUSAN:** *What coaching does, helps you pause, slow down, have presence, reflect. It enables you to zoom out and then you become much better at thinking through and making decisions that actually have the right impact now, but are also good for the longer term.*

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- **SUSAN:** *If you put yourself in the center of all of these changes that are happening around you, all the decisions you need to make, all the tools that you have access to, you know, how do you make sense of all of that? If you've got another human alongside you that is trained in coaching and is an expert at how to be present in that moment with lived experience, with wisdom, with all of the groundedness that coaches have, they will help you make sense of everything that's around you, everything that you're experiencing, in order that you can make the decision about what's the right pathway for you, what's your purpose, and how do you get from where you are today to where you want to be.*
- **KG:** *What would your advice be on how we can partner with and use technology to enhance the support and service we provide to individual leaders, to organizations, to societies we serve?*
- **SUSAN:** *I think AI offers us a few opportunities. Its strengths are in the fact that it solves problems faster than we can. It can automate repetitive tasks and it can uncover insights that we may not have seen or could not see.*
- **SUSAN:** *It can spot patterns and it can show how you might be impacting those patterns. And then you can look at that to decide, well, what decisions, what choices are there and what would be the right one for us to make in that moment. And so I think AI really as a partner, it's there to help you not only have the right kind of insights to make decisions or take actions, but it's also enabling you to scale.*
- **SUSAN:** *I think the more that we are aware where there are problems, the more we are and how they make the root cause of those problems. I think and I believe that humanity will be ingenious and find ways to solve for those so that we still can take the benefit of and value from these discoveries of AI. So what AI is doing in the world, it's not going to go away. I think it's going to get better and better the more that we understand how we can harness it for our good.*



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- **KG:** *In your observation, what are some other things, individuals, organizations, non-profit organizations and initiatives like the kind you lead, what role can they play in ensuring that the kind of work needed that you're pointing out, whether it's debiasing, ethical, human, prioritizing human rights, inclusion, those kinds of important aspects. How can NGOs, the individual leaders, corporates maybe even play a role and support this where governments and legislations are not yet adequate?*
- **SUSAN:** *The first thing is we can't be passive. We have to be active in this space. If I use myself as an example, you have to educate yourself. You have to become aware of what the challenges are, what the opportunities are, you know, and really understand what's surfacing. And I think from that point of view, then you have an obligation, no matter what role you have your obligation is twofold.*
- **SUSAN:** *One is public awareness. So if you are in a space where you can help others understand and keep safe, then we should. I do want to start a campaign that allows us to, you know, talk about do no harm, talk about how people using AI for experiences of companionship, et cetera, what the implications and the things to watch for are.*
- **SUSAN:** *Wherever you are impacting the world, so whatever position you're in, if you're working with other people who have the opportunity to leverage AI and everybody does, it's helped them on their pathway to experiment with it, play with it, gain curiosity around it, and then become practical users of AI.*



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- **SUSAN:** *I will be doing more to create educational courses, online activities and also probably a playground somewhere where somebody can play with the tools in a way that's safe. And also as part of my role, I have already got the AI standards and framework and our code of ethics, which provides guidance to people that are building technology in the coaching profession. But I want to do more in that space. I want to find smarter ways to vet and validate other people's technology so that I can provide assurances to our 62,000 members on which of the products that are being built for coaching, how do we assess them and how do they make decisions about which ones are right for them.*
- **KG:** *You talk the language of the younger generations, the next generations that are perhaps not even yet in the workforce. And I think everything you say and do speaks to that. If those in those generations are listening now, what would your advice to them be, whether in the choice of education, the kinds of things they choose to level up on? Do you have anything to say to the youngest generations?*
- **SUSAN:** *If you think about all of the changes that humanity has come through, each of the technological changes, even though people have been fearful of them and skeptical of them, they've all ended up doing good things for humanity. So this is a change. It is more significant because of the scale and speed, but I think just to remain hopeful in humanity and their place within it. And then to guide them, would say, what's in your heart, follow your heart.*
- **SUSAN:** *Follow your heart because that's the thing that's going to propel you in your mission, in your purpose, in your life. And a career is just one part of that life. It's not the whole thing. And then thinking about the future. AI is transforming everything that we do. Our lives, our work, how we play even. And it's a technology that is going to be moving fast.*



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- **SUSAN:** *If you're not a technologist, then I think thinking deeply about the human aspects of the world in the future, because we need the human infrastructure to really make sense of and create value and unlock possibility from the technology. The technology is not going to do it on itself. It needs humans doing that.*
- **SUSAN:** *I think creativity is still, the curiosity of a human mind and the innovation join in the dots in different ways. AI can't do that and therefore finds paths that enable you to think like that and how you might create strategies or blueprints for organizations or communities and really join all of those dots and leverage AI to enable it.*
- **SUSAN:** *If you can create a connection between the green ethics and the climate change and our green economy and AI, I think that again offers some future job opportunities.*
- **KG:** *This is a red thread throughout even in your podcast, it comes through, you're talking not just about humans, but really thinking about perhaps humans leading decision making but thinking about the entire planet, including other life forms and how important that is.*
- **KG:** *I know reverse mentoring has been something that's been developing, but you're talking about younger people having the ability to be powerful coaches as well. Can you share a little bit of a thought on that? Because I think that's powerful. All of us can learn so much from the fresh new thoughts that young people can bring to the table.*



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- **SUSAN:** *The qualities that make a great coach aren't necessarily qualities that come with age. I think they are innate things that part of it is that you already have that kind of propensity in your nurture, if you like, or nature.*
- **SUSAN:** *I don't see why age means that you cannot be a coach. I know people use the word wisdom, but wisdom, I think that's tapping into the wisdom of being a human. And the fact that we have, as long as humans have been evolving, that wisdom is passed on to each generation. And so they carry that wisdom irrespective of what age they have.*
- **SUSAN:** *I'm in a profession that transforms humans. And so putting these two things together, I think I'm absolutely in the right place at the right time to help humanity because we need human coaches, we need coaches to be helping people make sense of what's happening and to harness AI for the betterment of everybody. And this is the right space to do that in.*
- **KG:** *Is there a quote, a book or piece of advice that changed your life that you'd like to share with us?*
- **SUSAN:** *It's a quote by Emily Dickinson and it is, "I dwell in possibility."*



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