

Preface

IT'S EXCITING TO coauthor this book with Dr. Katherine Meese. Her research on engagement in healthcare and creating cultures where people can flourish is so important, now more than ever. To me, the fact that Katherine broke down the research across different departments in the organization greatly clarifies the specific conditions to maximize the most important capital we have in healthcare: people. Her research shows how the workplace is evolving and challenges some commonly held beliefs around what employees want. For example, money is not as much a factor in retaining employees as has been thought. Because of the impact of the pandemic, trustworthiness of senior leadership is more central to retention than has ever been previously known.

This last point is great news. Healthcare executives have always cared for their teams. The pandemic and other factors in the external environment have made things tough, but through thick and thin, I've watched senior leaders in our industry demonstrate a commitment to the "people" part of healthcare all along.

But what appeals to me the most about this book is how applicable the findings are to midlevel leaders. As we'll discuss later, the individuals in the middle have a tremendous effect on organizational performance. They have always had a tough job (and it's gotten even tougher in recent years) and a passion to do that job well. It is a privilege to be a part of a book that helps organizations invest in these critical players.

Healthcare is a wonderful place to build a lifelong career. My experience is that many people in a supervisory role got there much as I did: The boss quits, and the organization does an internal promotion. A person goes from an hourly or salaried position, where they are an individual contributor, to a supervisory role. This is a good thing, for the people we lead know we are familiar with the job. They also like the fact that, most often, these early-career promotions are internal. My observation is that a great many people in leadership roles learn mostly on the job and through leadership skill development offered via their place of work. As healthcare has become more complex and demanding, it is crucial that organizations fill this important role. Every leader in healthcare in every role is a chief development officer for those they lead.

That said, I applaud the individuals who are fortunate to achieve degrees in healthcare administration early on. These people know how important it is to continue learning. Master of health administration programs add a critical dimension to the knowledge of healthcare professionals.

I am grateful for the opportunity to partner with Katherine in writing *The Human Margin*. I am grateful for all my years of getting to know and learning from practitioners, leaders, and employees at all levels and in all types of organizations. And I am grateful for you, the readers, whose desire to make healthcare better continues to inspire me.

Thank you.

Quint Studer

WHEN I WAS a mother of two young toddlers, I felt that I had read every parenting book on the planet. I was committed to making sure they had sleep, optimally developed brains, and were well-prepared to start a nonprofit by age four for their future college applications.

But where I struggled most was in finding ways to implement the suggestions and philosophies in these parenting books. What do I *actually* say and do in the moment? Explaining brain development

and germ theory wasn't working well on my two-year-old. An older mother helped me see the magic of the short catchphrase. Is my kid licking the handrail in the bird section of the zoo?

“Not food.”

It was simple, effective, and useful in the moment.

As a new leader, I often found myself in desperate need of a good catchphrase. I knew the big picture of what I was supposed to be doing (kind of) but I needed the right words and tools! As a researcher, my passion is to help distill decades of research, explain it in a relatable way, and offer words, phrases, and tools you can use right now. My approach to this timely and important subject is to ask novel questions and study the findings that arise from them. In our ongoing research, my colleagues and I are constantly collecting data, analyzing it, and exploring the human element of healthcare work. While our goal is always to disseminate our findings through the peer-reviewed literature, that process is lengthy. Part of my goal in creating this book is to get some of these findings into the hands of leaders who are dealing with these issues right now. Interested readers can find more information about our methods in the Appendix at the back of this book.

I am excited to be partnering with Quint Studer on this. Quint has an amazing ability to take complicated ideas and to make them achievable and memorable. Furthermore, his decades of experience in helping organizations improve gives him a remarkable ability to know what types of activities and phrases are likely to work in practice.

I am continually awed and inspired by the dedication, passion, and courage that our healthcare workers display—often despite impossible situations. They are remarkable people. They deserve the best leadership and work environments we can provide so that they can bring their very best to patients and each other. My goal with this book is to help us move a step in that direction.

To our healthcare workers: Thank you for inspiring me daily with your courage and compassion.

All my gratitude,

Katherine Meese