

Moments with Marcus

By Marcus Engel

“Leaders Eat After Everyone is Fed”

Several years ago, a leadership guru named Simon Sinek released a book, “Leaders Eat Last.” The concept is pretty simple: above all other things, leaders take care of their people. They’ll be sure their people are all fed before they’ll eat themselves. “Fed” might mean actual food, but it can speak metaphorically to any resource, including time. That’s the nurse manager who covers for one of her bedside nurses when a family emergency arises. Or giving the gift of presence when a fellow nurse needs to vent. Leadership is a lot of things.

A few weeks ago, I got to witness this in action while working with a hospital in North Carolina. The committee that put together the conference was pretty huge. Like, 30 or 40 people from all professions throughout. Nurses chaired the group, but everyone was represented, even non-clinical. Attendees had to register in advance and (a good problem to have), the event was at capacity. But, attempts to register kept coming in. So, the conference committee made a decision: committee members would all give up their seats if it meant more of their friends and colleagues could join. And, they did. For hours. Through awards and recognitions, through my keynote and the coffee breaks. The committee members not only gave up their seats for lunch...but they gave up their lunches, too. Catering hadn’t planned for an extra 100 heads, so the committee had to send out for pizza. I mean, it’s the literal practice of that principle of leadership.

There are few things where I’d voluntarily spend hours standing. Maybe a Springsteen or Rolling Stones concert. Maybe a Mardi Gras celebration. Maybe if it included fishing. But, would I do it for anyone on my team here at the I’m Here Movement? In a heartbeat. I can’t do what I do if I don’t have my people.

Giving up one’s seat today is a sign of respect and propriety and I was so glad to see this demonstrated so well through inter-professionalism. But, talk to some 40 or 50 year career nurses and you’ll likely hear a different story. Stories of how, early in their careers, nurses were required to give up their seats for docs. Not only their seats, but some nurses were required to stand at attention when a doctor even entered a room. I’m glad as we progress as a society and in our world of healthcare, we’re seeing greater degrees of teamwork across professions than ever before. Teamwork takes trust. And, who better than nurses, the most trusted profession in our country, to take the lead on being sure everyone is fed?

Marcus Engel really likes healthcare professionals!

He’s also the author of “The Other End of the Stethoscope” and “I’m Here: Compassionate Communication in Patient Care.”

Marcus speaks, writes and lives to provide insight and strategies for excellent patient care.

MarcusEngel.com and ImHereMovement.org is where you can find him.