Interview with Blake Ashforth
MOC Distinguished Scholar 2018
Interviers: Kristie Rogers and Beth Schinoff

Kristie: All right. Blake, to start off: as an identity guy, we are curious about an alternative professional identity for you. If you were not Blake Ashforth, professor, who would you be and why?

Blake: Well, who I'd like to be is Blake Ashforth, novelist, but I never had the chops for that kind of writing. I'd probably be Blake Ashforth, the bus driver. No, if I hadn't become a prof, I probably would have stayed a manager and hated my entire life for doing so. But I think that's what I was actually reasonably well suited to do at the time. When I realized I could actually be a prof, that was a godsend to me. I mean, I've never ever regretted that decision to go back to school and get a PhD. This has been just the primo place for me to be.

Kristie: Awesome, so as a lifetime achievement award winner, you're someone who many people in the field look up to. Thinking back to earlier in your career, which OB scholars did you admire most?

Blake: Oh man, there's so many. I have a number of heroes. Dave Whetten, Jane Dutton, John Van Maanen, Henry Mintzberg, Jeffrey Pfeffer. These are people who were just brilliant thinkers and also really strong writers. I just lapped up their stuff as if they were novelists. I just couldn't get enough of what they had to say.

In my own personal circle I learned a lot from my own direct mentors. I had several, but the big influences on me in my early career were Bob House, Martin Evans and Dick Osborn and Gary Johns, as well. I mean they all are very different people, but they all in their own way impacted me.

Kristie: You've published so much cool research across a variety of OB topics. How on earth have you sustained your curiosity and your passion for research throughout your career?

Blake: I've always been a little reluctant to look at that for fear I might hurt the golden goose because I really don't know. I would never get therapy for that exact reason. I'd find out that I had bad toilet training at the age of four and that would destroy my creativity. I haven't questioned this thing during my career.

I guess curiosity is the right word for it, though, because it's most definitely like a fire in the sense that it just doesn't go out. And so even if it's not academia, I'm just intensely curious about why things work the

way they do. That's one of the reasons why I love qual research because you're basically paid to be nosy. You get to ask really intrusive questions. But thankfully for the right reasons, right? You actually want to learn something.

For example, I was doing a study on service workers and we were coding the transcripts and my coauthor was aghast because I asked a funeral director if he ever would embalm a family member. She thought that was the most intrusive thing you could ever ask. I just thought it was a cool question. Who wouldn't want to know the answer to that?

That kind of nosiness has kept me going. Because of that, though, it has made me very peripatetic. That is I tend not to stay in any one area for that long just because I get bored easily. I move around just because it keeps the fire alive. Trying to learn new things about new topics.

Now mind you, there's a huge cost to that. You have to ramp up all the time for new literatures, but it's the reading, it's the immersion that I love the most. Give me an excuse to read 200 articles on something and I'm never happier. Where does it come from? I honestly have no idea. At the end of the day though, yeah, curiosity is exactly the word for it. I want to know how the world works the way that it does. In part because I'm pretty thick when it comes to things like technology. If I have something I can actually unpack, I really do want to unpack that well.

Kristie: Now, if you're connecting the dots for people who are listening or reading this earlier in their careers, there's a tension between jumping from topic-to-topic to stay interested and sticking with one thing and being really good at it and very efficient in that area. How do you balance that in terms of advice for either those you mentor or people in the field in general?

Blake: My message is more do as I say, not as I do. The cost of jumping around is very high because you are having to ramp up continuously, which is not attainable if you're pre-tenure. But that said, I really worry when people focus, focus, focus, which is the prevailing advice you get at PDWs, that it makes you more and more narrow. You're basically digging a great, deep hole and after a while that deep hole doesn't let in any light. I think there is a lot to be said about having several holes or an entire foundation that you're digging for a number of areas because there are synergies across these areas.

The advice I tend to give is trying to have it both ways. That is “yes,” you need to have some specialties that define you. The brand does matter. You need to have an identity. But at the same time don't be a one-note player. You want to have several things where there's hopefully a synergy between them.

Have several things that you are passionate about and can play off against one another, and you can create new ideas because of the synergies that have yet to be explored by other people. Broad and deep simultaneously, I guess is the message. It's a mixed message for sure, but it's because there's value in both.

Kristie: Okay. That's great. Do you have a favorite paper that you've written?

Blake: Hmm. I'm going to guess the 1999 dirty work paper with Glenn Kreiner in AMR. The reason that's my favorite is because it gave Glenn and I a few things to read, literally hundreds of ethnographies on dirty work. We read about everything from driving a bus, to being in a sewer, to putting down animals, to digging for gold. I absolutely loved doing that.

Coming up with a model, that was just gravy, just the reading alone made that worthwhile. In fact, if I look back on my career, probably the dirty work thread has continued to be fascinating for me because it gives me an excuse to read all these really cool ethnographies.

Kristie: This is likely a good segue to the next question because I think your answer will be related. Where do you look for inspiration? What gives you your research ideas?

Blake: I can tell you where I *don't* look and that is journal articles. I do think that if a person looks to the future research implications in the back of an article for their inspiration, they're going to be a day late and a dollar short for the rest of their career. Because by the time stuff appears there, it's already being done by somebody else. Also, those tend to do the deep dive thing where the deep hole gets deeper.

I tend to look to broader things, novels, plays, talking to people at parties, just keeping my ears open generally outside of my work. That's where I think the best ideas come from. I've never liked poetry, but I imagine there's a lot of wisdom in there. I think you can get an idea from anywhere.

Bob Sutton, years ago, wrote about hard ideas from soft sources. I thought that was a great way of putting it. You'd never acknowledge the fact you got a great idea from Vanity Fair, but why not? Vanity Fair's a good magazine. It's got all sorts of cool implications. I'd be receptive to any ideas from anywhere. They're all fair game.

Kristie: Do you have any professional regrets?

Blake: Only small ones. I mean, I'm basically very happy with how things have gone. The small things just sound like me whining. That's how little stock

I put in them. Examples like this, I mean there are things early in my career that I sent to lesser journals only because I didn't have the confidence in the papers. Looking back I think, “oh, why didn't I submit that to a journal that would have had a better audience?”

I also wish that I had discovered the joys of mentoring earlier in my career. I was too self-centered and gung-ho early in my career to sort of give it much thought. But once I started, that to me has become the ultimate choice. Being able to work with young people on cool ideas. I wish I started that a bit earlier. Beyond that, no, no. I really look back and don't have any major regrets.

Kristie: Okay, so when people hear your name they often think of great theory papers. Do you have any processes or structured practices around how you build theory?

Blake: I guess the answer is, “yes.” I've never written the same way twice, but I guess after all these years there is a bit of a template that I follow. That is, I usually start with a topic more so than a particular idea. For example, dirty work. We just knew the topic was fascinating. We didn't really have a research question per se. But just like doing qual research, if you do a deep dive into the literature you'll almost always find something worth talking about.

And so often I'll start with a topic that I think is underdeveloped and intriguing and just do a deep dive into it. In doing the deep dive, cool ideas come out. Especially when you're working with cool coauthors. That's where the fun comes in. Right? Talking through ideas.

The anthropomorphization paper that Beth, Shelley Brickson and I did, that was new to all of us. We just read deeply and broadly about this really bizarro topic and we talked a lot about what we were finding and went through I don't know how many iterations of a two-by-two to try to develop a model. And, finally, one day we had it. To me, that's the way to go about, just lose yourself in whatever literature fascinates you knowing that, just like qual research, you will find cool things to hang your hat on eventually.

My papers tend to be very unstructured initially. That is, there really is no direction or even a research question. And it's only as I read that ideas begin to gel and I jot them down as I go and eventually I see a structure or maybe a model and start to knit them together. Then just like a carpenter with a sander you go over, over, over, getting out the rough edges. Ultimately, the paper looks like you always had this cool idea from the outset, even though it might not have been discovered until day 273 of the paper.

That's where the craftsmanship comes in, is in making the paper sound like you had this really coherent idea from day one and here's how the paper followed from it. When to me, it's completely the other way around. I often will write the conclusion before I write the introduction cause I really don't know what I'm gonna say we were doing until I've actually said it. Immersion and having the confidence to believe that something good will surface at the end, I guess, are my watchwords.

Kristie: Okay, and when you're in that like discovery stage of the process, how often are you talking with coauthors about the ideas?

Blake: More as time goes on because initially you don't really know that much. I deliberately read very broadly initially, including journals I wouldn't normally look at, because I really want to get a sense of the lay of the land. The more I read, the more I get a better sense of where the better, more promising articles are and the ideas start to percolate.

As the ideas start to percolate, that's when the conversations begin. You think, “hey, I think I see something here. What do you think?” Or “what are you seeing that we should talk about?” The more you get into it, the more elaborate the discussions become and you figure out where you're trying to go. Now it's a very iterative process, of course. Reading, talking, writing, reading, talking, writing. It's anything but linear. Anything but sequential.

I fear that if I tried to write a sequential paper where I mapped it out from day one, it would read in a very boring way because that would be just a meat and potatoes paper. I think the fun parts of the paper and the insights and coolest asides come from jumping around like you're a frog on lily pads. Conversations are strong fuel for doing that.

In working with you guys, for example, we would often talk about ideas not really knowing where the conversation was going to go, but invariably something cool came out of it. Well that's the frog leaping across different lily pads. I think conversations are essential for honing good ideas. So much so that I seldom work alone. I find it way more fun and also productive to work with other people.

Kristie: Are there any pieces of your routine for drafting or finalizing a manuscript that others may find unique or uncommon?

Blake: I think the unstructuredness of it all. I've been in enough PDWs that have different templates for how people go about writing theories. I realized what I do is unusual. Now I realize when you're doing a quant paper, that has to be more formulaic by definition because you have to have hypotheses and a method, analysis, and so on.

In theory papers or qual papers, which are my two areas now, there's a lot more scope for jumping around freely. I do think that people are surprised to hear that I really am that loosey-goosey in doing papers. Also, long-term, I never really plan what I'm going to do beyond the next year to two years. At any one time I'm juggling any number of papers, but I haven't really thought beyond, we'll say, two years, just because I don't want to be that structured.

I'm afraid there'll be something cool that comes along like a book chapter invitation or some new phenomenon or some article that's sparked some interest in me and if I structure my life, I won't have room for these spontaneous things. Also, I'm afraid that if I plan my life that much, I'll be bored by it. And there's nothing worse than looking at a paper and going, "oh, I don't want to read that again." It's an awful feeling.

By having my work life that unstructured every day feels fresh. Now that said, in any paper there are parts of it that feel like a grind. But fortunately those days are few and far between, especially for theory papers.

Kristie: As Beth and I were talking about this, we were thinking that yes, you are very unstructured in the thinking and the development of ideas. But there are things that you do every time, like a simultaneous final read of a paper with coauthors, checking references against the first page of the original, keeping a master bibliography of everything you've cited. These things make you the most organized and meticulous human ever. It's really amazing that you can juggle both of those.

Blake: Oh, well thanks. I'm not sure it's warranted. I mean I just finished my 2016 taxes. I don't know how organized I am. When it comes to things like running the OB division, well, there you have to be structured or get the heck out of the way and let somebody else do the job better than you're going to do it.

Yes, in that way I do have routines for writing that I think are quite helpful and I am pretty religious about them because they *are* so helpful. But they are few and far between. You actually mentioned three things of not a whole lot that I have that are structured, but I think are helpful to me. Let me underscore one of them that you mentioned. That's having the final read where we all sit down and do it.

Typically, that takes us a day to do. You think, "how could it take a day after you've already read the paper 47 times?" Well, the truth is when you read it with that optic – this is the final draft before we send it to the journal – it's amazing how many things you see, big and little, that for some reason you had missed the previous year.

I've yet to do a final read where we don't find things that are worth talking about. I love doing that with my coauthors because then you can talk about them in real time and fix it right then and there. But those kinds of structured episodes for me are actually very few and far between. If you were to watch me doing a paper over the course of a year, you'd be appalled at just how chaotic it truly is. But again, I kind of prize the chaos. I think from chaos good things come.

Kristie: At this point in your career, do your submissions ever get rejected?

Blake : Regularly. Are you kidding? Yes. It's like anybody else. I'm always shocked when they are. Then when you read the review, you go, “all right. Yeah, I guess they had a point,” so you kind of grudgingly see what they're after. Yes, I get rejected quite a lot. Yep. I suppose the only difference is ... Sorry, go ahead.

Kristie: How do you deal with it? How do you respond to the rejections?

Blake: Thrashing, kicking the fridge and complaining about how unfair the world is. That lasts about a day and then I look at the actual review and see if there's merit in it. Invariably there is. Well, most of the time there is. Then, kind of figure out, “okay, what next?” Next steps.

I try not to wallow in it just because you can go down a rabbit hole doing that. Because I have a number of things on the go, no one paper ever matters that much at this career stage anymore. It's very different if you're untenured of course, because every paper can be monumental. But at this stage I kind of take them in stride.

Now what I do feel is for my coauthors, because they typically are junior, which means this really does matter to them getting a job or getting tenure. I feel for them because this process can just drive you up a wall. For me personally though, it's not that big a deal because I know there's other journals out there so I'm not too worried about polishing it up and sending it off for somewhere else.

Kristie: I've asked you this before and I'm thinking one of the times I ask you, you're going to have a new answer. What's on your professional bucket list?

Blake Well, because I don't think long term, and that's by design, I don't know that I actually have a bucket list. Now, I actually did early in my career. I literally had a drawer of ideas, cool ideas I thought I could do some day and I actually would go into the drawer when I had dry spells and see what I had come up with three or four or five years ago.

I don't do that anymore because it just seems that the projects emerge almost like, I was going to say maggots. That's a horrible metaphor. Like seeds in a field. They just bloom somehow. I have enough things underway now that I don't really agonize about what I'm going to be working on a year from now because I know something will come across my desk and I'll think "oh, that's a cool idea." I'll be invited onto a project that sounds very cool. I'm sorry, what was your question? I've now talked myself into this loop.

Kristie: It was a bucket list. Do you have anything on your professional bucket list?

Blake: I actually don't. I mean I've never been extrinsically motivated. Things like this MOC award are fantastic. It's not like I sought them or expected them, so when they come in it's a fantastic honor, but not something I ever really thought about. If it isn't intrinsic, why do it? That's the beauty of what we do, right? If you're intrinsically motivated, you tend to do a better job. I've tried to hold on to that.

In doing that it enables me to kind of follow my nose. Over the years I've worked on a number of projects that I knew would never be that well cited because they were kind of obscure. I thought the ideas were nonetheless kind of important and kind of cool, so I'm happy to have done them.

That's what intrinsic motivation is all about, right? Not thinking about, "oh, I have to get x citations or x, whatevers." It's more about doing what you think is interesting and matters and keeps you kind of juiced. If that's there, I'm happy to do it regardless of what the extrinsic outcome might be.

Kristie: That's terrific. Imagine you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about the field of OB. What would it be?

Blake: Probably the tenure process. I think we have this incredible wall that we put in the way of bright young scholars called tenure. Because that wall is real, it causes people to do, I think, unhealthy machinations to get around it. They stick to one narrow area and just build out small extensions of the same thing. Or they data slice or they try to leverage their time by being on a lot of papers, even ones they can't do a whole lot for.

It causes game playing plus a heck of a lot of angst. Because it causes so much angst, when people do get tenure there's a noticeable drop off, often, in their productivity. If you look at people's productivity in their careers, it often falls off a cliff after tenure, and again when they become full.

That's because, I think, the angst of the process kind of puts them off research. If I could wave a wand, I would get rid of tenure entirely and have something more like three year rolling average for evaluations. Yes, you have to be accountable. But the idea of an all-or-none tenure system strikes me as just too blunt.

I like schools that are experimenting. LSE for example, allows eight years. That's all to the good. Your school, Marquette, you were saying to me, Kristie, allows two kicks at the can if you go up for tenure early. That's all to the good. I like schools that are trying to find ways around this draconian opera after six years. And, of course, six years usually means five, right? Cause you come up after your fifth year and that is not much time to hit the numbers the top schools expect. If I could wave a wand, I would revamp or just scrap tenure entirely.

Beth: We appreciate that, Blake.

Kristie: That's great. Yes, we're definitely your audience for that one. Beth is going to take over now with questions about AOM and MOC.

Blake: Okay.

Beth: You are clearly extremely prolific in terms of research and you're a great teacher. But what's impressed me is that you've always carved out time to do professional service also. You've been active in many AOM divisions. You even mentioned that you were President of OB at one point. What's the fire that fuels your involvement in AOM more broadly?

Blake: Two things. One is that it's important. We don't have a field if we don't do this. Everybody has to play their part or we haven't got a field to play in. I feel that service mission deeply because it's just so essential. But also, two, there's a lot to enjoy about it and the best part of it is the people you work with.

I was in the OB Division Administration for eight years, three as a rep-at-large and five in the chair rotation. I loved it because every year there'd be some new faces and some would rotate off. Over the eight years, I met a lot of people and it was fantastic getting to know them. These are all people who came to it for the right reasons. They were there to do a good job and for all the right reasons.

I just found it really enjoyable to work with people. That was just icing on the cake.

Beth: Yeah, you're such a people person, Blake. It's interesting in a solitary career that you're so drawn to others…

Blake: Thanks for saying that although I'm actually a strong introvert, so I think maybe I'm a situational extrovert. I'm extroverted when I need to be, but my default is actually quite introverted.

Beth: That's interesting, and we'll get to more things like that. Given your experience with multiple AOM divisions, what do you see as unique about MOC?

Blake: For me, what makes MOC really attractive is the fact that it often is cross-level. cause a lot of the stuff they look at inherently crosses levels. In fact, to understand it, you need to look at those vertical linkages. I love the fact that it causes you to sort of collapse micro, meso, and macro in a lot of research questions you have, whether about identity, or about culture, or sensemaking or learning for that matter. It spans all levels of analysis.

Our core competence as organizational scholars is the organization itself, which is inherently multilevel, multidisciplinary, multi-problem. MOC, I think is ideally poised to look at those kinds of intersections. I've seen a lot of power in that. Of course, cognition is one of the foundational things in our life. If you haven't got cognition you haven't got human beings. It's hard to think of managerial issues that in some sense don't involve MOC-style issues. They're inherently dealing with core questions.

Beth: Do you have any favorite MOC memories?

Blake: Yeah, I've done “Cognition in the Rough” two or three times over the years and I love doing that because you get to meet these young authors with such cool ideas. Because you talk to them when the ideas are still being played at. It's “in the rough,” after all. You get to help them shape cool ideas to be even better and that's just inherently fun.

I especially love the enthusiasm of dealing with doctoral students. I love the enthusiasm and the energy. Everything's brand new and everything is fun and that's contagious, so I really enjoy that. This year, I'm going to do “Presenting in the Rough” for the first time and I imagine it’s much the same. You're trying to help people think about these things you normally don't think about a whole lot.

Beth: That's awesome. We're gonna kind of transition a little bit back towards you, away from AOM. Aside from the fact that you're an introvert but you appear extroverted situationally, what's one thing that people would be surprised to know about you?

Blake: Hmm, one thing they'd be surprised to know about me. I'll tell you what, Beth, you know me as well as anybody. What do you think I would say? And, then, I will comment on what you've said.

Beth: I mean, I would say the superhero thing.

Blake: Hey, I'll go with that one. Yeah, I'm a big comic geek. That is true. I come by that honestly. My brother was into it, and so from the age of nothing I was weaned on Spiderman and Batman comics. That's been a lifelong love, I gotta tell ya. Yeah, I very much enjoy that.

I credit my love of reading to comics. I mean, I learned to read because I wanted to know what the heck Batman was saying to the Joker. It was very important to know that stuff.

Beth: You mentioned before that you get a bunch of research ideas from things like, you said, not poetry. But you know, books and movies. Have you ever gotten a research idea from comics?

Blake: Not that I can think of. Although that's certainly open. True, that's one more thing I read, so why not? I did come across a book in a bookstore recently, basically psychoanalyzing Batman fans. What's the appeal of Batman? I nearly bought it until I thought, “what are you doing?” I don't want to figure out the academic reason why I like the guy. I just want to know that I like him. I don't want to find out that I’ve had some screw loose from the age of two. I was quite happy to keep those things separate. But no, if an idea came out of a comic, I'd be more than happy to use it.

Now mind you, would I cite Batman 697? I highly doubt I would do that. Although, I did work into an exam once, the name of Alfred Pennyworth, who is Batman's butler. Occasionally, I do silly games like that.

Beth: Did any of your students notice?

Blake: One did. He came up and he said, "Hey, I know who that is." I gave him an A on the spot. Just kidding.

Beth: Blake, if you could be any Marvel character, since we're kind of in this age of marvel now, who would you be and why?

Blake: I’d like to say Spiderman because he’s so down to earth and has such cool powers, but he's also so neurotic and so broke. I just can't say him in good conscience. I'd like to say Thor because, hey, who doesn't want to be a long blonde-haired god? But that one's kind of out of reach for me. I'd probably go with Captain America. He has no powers but his head's screwed on right. Like he knows what he's all about, and it's all about doing what he believes is right, whatever the cost to himself personally.

He's Marvel's Superman, right? Mr. Boy Scout. I've always admired the clarity of his ideology. I'd also like to say Ironman, but I am so awful with technology. I can't even pretend to be Ironman. That just wouldn't happen.

Beth: I take it that you don't spend a lot of time in your free time on computers, but how do you spend your free time?

Blake: My wife and I are both really big movie buffs, so we see a lot of movies. We also travel a lot and we'll do a heck of a lot more, hopefully, in the next few years. Beyond that, I'm pretty boring. I mean a lot of reading, a lot of walking. We also go to a fair number of restaurants, so nothing too spectacular. The only thing that's unusual, of course, is the comics. That I fully realize is unusual.

Unfortunately for me, Marvel and DC publish so much, it's impossible to keep up. It kind of feels like journal articles. After a while you're thinking, "oh my God." Right now I'm up to, I think, 2008 with the X-Men, which means I'm 11 years behind. It's just the nature of the beast when they produce as many comics as they do. Yes, my preoccupations outside of work are painfully mundane, but nonetheless fun for me.

Beth: You mentioned that you and Deb enjoy traveling. Do you have a funny travel story that you'd be willing to share?

Blake: Oh man. Where do you begin? Well, when I was a teenager, I should have died in a volcano, literally. I was on Mount Etna, which is in Sicily, and I slept in this cabin, halfway up the slope. I was supposed to go on a tour the next morning. But I woke up early and thought, "I don't need no stinking tour."

I did my own self-appointed tour. Well, the reason you needed a tour is because Mount Etna is covered in volcanic vents. There I was, all alone, not knowing where it was safe to walk. I went on all fours up to the edge of one vent and I'm looking into it and it's just this cauldron of boiling lava, literally.

All of a sudden the wind shifted and I was blanketed in sulfur. I couldn't see and I couldn't breathe and I was literally dying. I thought, I have to leave or I'm a dead man. But I didn't know where, I hadn't paid attention to where I was in this lava field. I blindly, like Frankenstein, groped through the mist not seeing a darn thing.

Finally, the air lifted as my lungs were about to burst. I looked back in the ash and had somehow done this S-turn around two vents. My first thought was, "how am I not dead?" To this day, I have no idea how I just

randomly walked around two vents without falling in. I'm not sure about the funny part, but the drama part was sure there, darn it.

Beth: Sounds like Captain America to me.

Blake: Yes, there was a bat signal in the sky that night and that was my beacon.

Beth: Our final question is, so you're on a call right now with me and Kristie and we want to know which of your doctoral students has been your favorite? That was actually a Kristie question. Seriously ...

Blake: It's a seven-way tie, that's pretty damn obvious.

Beth: That sounds like a cop-out, but we'll just leave it at that. We're wondering what you want to be known for when you retire. What sort of legacy you would like to leave behind?

Blake: It's going to sound like a cliché, but I think the next generation is a huge part of what I take pride in. When you guys get publications, or you guys get tenure, or promotion, or whatever comes your way, that, to me, is like it happened to me. It just feels that good.

Kristie just told me now that she got a conditional acceptance at AMJ and, oh my God, I'm over the moon with that. That's fantastic. I'm so damn proud of each one of my former doctoral students and current doctoral students. To me that's fantastic. That's number one.

Number two, hopefully, that I've done interesting things that have provoked people to think of some things in new ways. Because I *am* kind of peripatetic I realize that I planted a lot of seeds and I have no idea what will sprout long-term, but I'm hoping that along the way enough people have been interested enough that it's helped shape their thinking. There's no particular paper I hang my hat on, or particular strain of research I hang my hat on. But I hope that somewhere in all those ideas, something struck other people as interesting.

Beth: I can guarantee that they have. Blake, I think those are all the questions that we have for you. Is there anything else that you think we should talk about that you'd like to talk about?

Blake: Well, let me just talk about where we are as a field for a second because the milestones are real in this field, you know, getting that first job and getting your three-year review and getting tenure and getting that A that's gonna put you over the top. I think there's a tendency for us to focus on the, not the nasty, but the potential pitfalls in our field. Ultimately, when you stand back, I think everyone would say we're in an awesome field. I

mean, we're given incredible autonomy to pursue ideas that we think matter. It might actually help the world if we can figure out how the heck organizations and management work.

We've been given a heavy responsibility to do what we do and it's one that's just so intrinsically enjoyable. I mean think about this. Your day is basically to go out and find something that's important to the world that you can talk about. That's pretty much your job description. What a cool thing that is.

I would just like to underscore how, at the end of the day, we have awesome careers and it's just too bad that I think our crazy administrative process has caused us to focus more on the pitfalls and how to avoid them than on these glorious things we ought to be thinking about daily.

Kristie: That's such a great message.

Beth: Yeah, I'd elect you, Blake.

Blake : Well, this has been fun.

Kristie: Yeah, thank you so much.

Blake : No, not at all.

Beth: Yeah, thank you, Blake.

Blake : Not at all. Anytime.