

Lessons in Productivity: An Interview with Robert L. Schalock by Patricia Navas

Robert L. Schalock is currently Professor Emeritus from Hastings College (Nebraska, USA), after being Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychology at this institution. His prolific career has led him to teach at other universities through USA and other countries such as Spain (University of Salamanca), Belgium (University of Gent) or China (Chongqing Normal University, Mainland).

Dr. Schalock is a former President of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) and he has been Member and Chair of the Board of numerous associations. Dr. Schalock participates in the Editorial Boards of more than 10 journals and his job and dedication to the field of Intellectual and Developmental disabilities has been recognized by more than 15 institutions.

Although most of his recent work is focused on Quality of Life of people with IDD, he is a current member of different Committees of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (i.e, adaptive behavior, supports, terminology and classification).



Patricia Navas: Dr. Schalock, you have written more than 40 book chapters and more than 100 articles. I am sure that many of the students who will read this interview will be very impressive with these numbers. *Do you have any advice for students and early career professionals when it comes to writing for publications?*

Bob Schalock: *Write something daily...it need not be all that great, but writing is like any other habit—the more you ‘exercise it’ the better you will become at it. In addition, start with an outline to direct your writing. That framework will allow you to be much more effective (in terms of clear communication) and efficient (in terms of time utilization). Once you have a good draft, THEN REDUCE IT BY 50%...AND THEN BY AN ADDITIONAL 24%. At that point, you will have a pretty good article!*

Patricia Navas: As you well know, the field of research requires a great deal, because it involves various tasks, among which many of us are particularly concerned about publishing papers in journals of high scientific impact. *What lessons regarding productivity have you learned during your career?*

Bob Schalock: *Focus on quality and not quantity. Stay as much as possible in one area so you can develop a good data base and are comfortable in writing regarding the area. Stay away from areas that you are not familiar with. One does not want to appear ignorant or uninformed.*

Never pass up an opportunity to contribute to a book, presentation, or article. Work with colleagues to increase synergy. Use the editor’s and reviewers’ comments to learn and improve your product. Take every advantage to resubmit. When you do resubmit an article, be VERY SPECIFIC about how you have addressed the reviewers’ concerns/comments.

Patricia Navas: *What are mistakes that you see students and early career professionals making that harm their productivity?*

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Lessons in Productivity, cont'd

Bob Schalock: *Not following the above advice.*

Patricia Navas: Many young researchers struggle to remain productive during relatively unstructured summers or spring breaks. Most of us could probably benefit from some strategies to make our time during these periods more effective. *Are there any specific strategies that you use to stay productive during relatively unstructured periods?*

Bob Schalock: *Treat available time as a gift....there is far too little of it. Play hard, but work equally hard. Set writing goals for each day. Use the early morning while lying in bed to generate ideas and follow through with writing about them EACH day. Read widely, so you can benefit from the wisdom, creativity, and productivity of others. Don't wait for the GREAT AND UNIQUE IDEA OR AREA TO PURSUE. Look to*

the field and see where the needs are, and where you can make 'your niche' Follow that dream and the niche will become yours.

Patricia Navas: Perhaps we are too worried about publishing and we're not realizing that what really matters is our ability to organize our time so that we will be more efficient. *If you could start your career again knowing what you know now, would you structure your time differently?*

Bob Schalock: *Not at all. I've tried so summarize my approach to time management that readers may find useful. The title of the book, which is published with my colleague and wonderful friend Miguel Verdugo, is: "The Time Crunchers Guide to Time Management....It's a Matter of Priorities and Strategies." It is available on the INICO web-site.*

Calling all AAIDD Fellows, seasoned professionals, and those seeking to mentor students and early career professionals!

The Guide Program is a mentoring program that is a part of the Student and Early Career Professionals (SECP) Special Interest Group. Currently, we are seeking Guides who are willing to mentor students and early career professionals in the areas of Education, Health, Inclusion, Mental Health, Policy, Psychology, Religion, and Transition. Becoming a Guide is simple. It's as easy as (1) Contact Emily Wallace (wallacee@wusm.wustl.edu) or Sarah Hall (sahall@ashland.edu); (2) Express your area of interest; and (3) Communicate with the student or early career professional with whom you are matched two or three times per year (You can even meet at the AAIDD Annual Meetings!). See, it's that simple.

Still not convinced!?! Here is my story. While a graduate student at the University of Kansas in the area of family and policy studies, I had the pleasure of being matched with Rev. Bill Gaventa. Because of my additional interest in religion and spirituality, I was able to not only connect with a leader in our field, but I was also able to connect with the Religion and Spirituality SIG. Because of Bill's mentorship, I have connected with AAIDD as a national organization and with other professionals with similar interest at level in which I am not sure I would have without him being my Guide. Even though Bill and I only connected with one another once or twice a year via email, I always looked forward to the Annual Meeting. Not only did we connect during the Religion and Spirituality SIG events, but he also supported me by attending my presentations. I know that may seem like a small thing, but it was a huge thing for me. As a result, I am still an active and involved member of AAIDD and attendee at our Annual Meetings.

Consider being a Guide. You never know the impact you might have on the career of a student or early career professional!