



Isenberg

School News

Business Implications of Honest Signals

Compared with “honest signals” like mimicry and “influence displays,” language is relatively new to our species, observed MIT Media Lab’s **Alex Sandy Pentland** in a lecture in April at the Isenberg School. The lecture was a highlight in the INFORMS (the Institute of Operations Research and the Management Sciences) Lecture Series, coordinated each semester by the campus’s INFORMS student chapter. Honest signals underlie language and help us to “read” a great deal of human behavior. “They are very hard to fake,” emphasized Pentland.

“Malcolm Gladwell’s *Blink* talks about gaining insights thorough split-second exposure to behavior through “thin slicing.” Our research adds computational theory to that.

“By listening to just 30 seconds of a telemarketing call, we can predict with 89 percent accuracy—just from the operator’s tone of voice—how successful that call will

be,” noted Pentland, who has achieved similar successes in studying thin slices in sales negotiations, business plan pitches, and speed dating.

“We use badge systems and smart phones to X-ray entire organizations,” Pentland continued. Signaling seems to have evolved with networks of communicators, he noted. Pentland’s research indicates that organizations with interlocking star-shaped networks and communicators at the nodes have greater cohesion, are more productive, and make faster, better decisions.”) For a nontechnical overview of his research, Pentland recommended his recently published book, *Honest Signals*, (MIT Press).

HONEST SIGNALS

HOW THEY SHAPE OUR WORLD

ALEX SANDY PENTLAND



Mark McDonald Wins the 2009 North American Society for Sport Management Distinguished Educator’s Award

Isenberg School Sport Management Professor Mark McDonald is this year’s recipient of the North American Society for Sport Management’s (NASSM) 2009 Distinguished Sport Management Educator’s Award. NASSM is the world’s largest professional sport management association.

Professor McDonald received this year’s award for innovative teaching that included two courses that emphasized experiential learning. In the first, students organized and ran SoccerFest, a weekend community soccer competition that attracted over 130 teams, 4,000 spectators, and 180 volunteers. In the second course, students leveraged social networking and other innovative marketing techniques to attract students in January to the Winter Dew Tour at Mount Snow.

NASSM promotes, stimulates, and encourages study, research, scholarly writing, and professional development in sport management—both theoretical and applied. Topics of interest to NASSM members include sport marketing, future directions in management, employment perspectives, management competencies, leadership, sport and the law, personnel management, facility management, organizational structures, fund raising, and conflict resolution.

Isenberg School’s HTM Department Receives Annual Hospitality Award

The Isenberg School’s *Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management* (HTM) is the 2009 recipient of the Howdy Spotlight Award for hospitality excellence. Presented annually by the Greater Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau (GSCVB), the award honors sustained, outstanding service to the Pioneer Valley’s tourism industry.

A letter to HTM department head **Haemoon Oh** informing him of the honor praised his department’s long-term commitment to the culture and economy of hospitality and tourism in the Pioneer Valley. “Clearly the superior work ethic and dedication to the industry starts at the top of this department, and is imprinted in those who take its courses,” emphasized GSVBC president Mary Kay Wydra. The letter praised the work of Professor **Rod Warnick** and two HTM students, who collected, analyzed, and shaped tourism research trend data for widespread use by the bureau.