

# MIT TECH TALK

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## Sloan prof's 'cozy' castle wins best small hotel award

By Darren J. Clarke  
News Office



Built in the 14th century, Langley Castle in Northumberland, England, is now a hotel and restaurant owned by Stuart Madnick, professor of information technology.

The pride of Professor [Stuart Madnick](#) is now the pride of Northumberland, England.

Since 1985, Madnick has been the proud owner of [Langley Castle](#), a 14th-century structure that he transformed into a hotel and restaurant. Over the years, it's has become one of the finest hotels in the region, and in October it won the Pride of Northumbria award for Best Small Hotel.

Langley Castle's eligibility for the award is telling of its charm. With only eight bedrooms inside its seven-foot-thick walls, it is, in Madnick's words, "a cozy castle." Each guest room is uniquely decorated with period detail and includes all the amenities found in a modern hotel.

Not that Langley lacks the features that would draw a visitor to a castle in the first place. There are giant fireplaces, sprawling gardens and an entire tower dedicated to housing a dozen medieval toilets.

Langley also stands apart for the "purity" of its architecture, Madnick said. Unlike other castles from the same era, it has not been subjected to the decorative whims of scores of owners. Several years after it was completed in 1350, a major fire burned out all of the floors. The exterior walls remained intact, but it sat uninhabited for almost five centuries until it was purchased by an English historian in the late 1800s. The historian and his wife spent much of their lives restoring the castle to its original greatness, and their years of hard work paid off. "There's a magical feel about the place," Madnick said.

Many members of the MIT community have visited, and according to Madnick, most say

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that "it's even more beautiful than the brochures can depict." Visitors from the Institute typically receive a special MIT discount.

Madnick visits his fortress away from home every few months but leaves the day-to-day decision-making to his English management team.

As a professor of information technology at the Sloan School, he teaches students about the difficult task of integrating information by overcoming semantic differences among data. To illustrate the point, he tells stories of semantic differences between British and American English that he's encountered while running the hotel.



Madnick

Two prior Langley Castle owners were beheaded over "misunderstandings" with the queen, so **successful** communication is imperative.

"So far, my head is still attached," Madnick said.

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