INTERVIEWER: Today is July 9, 2010. I am Karen Arenson.

We are talking today with Glen L. Urban, a professor at the Sloan School of Management at MIT, and a former dean of the School. He is an expert in marketing and new product development. His recent research has focused on how to develop trust-based marketing systems on the internet, and how to morph a website to fit individual cognitive and cultural styles. He is also chairmen of the MIT Center for Digital Business.

Glen, thank you for talking with us today.

URBAN: Pleasure to be here.

INTERVIEWER: During your years as dean of the Sloan School, enrollments in the Sloan Master's degree program grew by more than half to 350 students per year, and applications more than doubled to 3,300. Where did all that growth come from, and how did you get it?

URBAN: Well, we had several strategic retreats with the key faculty members after I became dean, and really felt that our footprint was too small. We thought we had excellence, but not enough scale. So we embarked on a strategy of increasing scale, and hopefully, also increasing excellence. That led to more students, more faculty, and particularly, some really great high quality faculty, and I think some high quality students, which then gave us, I think, better recognition, a better ability to get recruiters here, sponsored research funds, and support faculty.

INTERVIEWER: Where did the perception that it was too small come from? Was it within Sloan or from top-down in the Institute?

URBAN: Sloan's always been kind of a community consensus kind of school. So I think everyone kind of felt -- you know, Harvard was really very big, Wharton, very big, particularly the undergraduate program. Northwestern recently at that time had ascended in the rankings and was larger. We felt some of our evaluations by business, such as recruiting quality, suffered from the fact people didn't know us. We felt we could do a better job and be a larger school and that would help our recognition, as well as create more good work.

INTERVIEWER: The program is still far smaller than those ones you mentioned. How did you determine that this was an appropriate size, or did you think it should be even bigger than this?

URBAN: Well, we took the biggest step we thought we could -- 50 percent was to keep the quality of the program. At the same time, we revised the program. So, a lot of things were happening. I think since then, Dick Schmalensee and Dave Schmittlein continue to increase the Sloan School footprint. Recently the Sloan School announced an executive MBA program. So that will add considerable scale, and we've added an undergraduate minor, which adds high talent people coming through.

So, I think the body count, if you count across the Sloan Fellows and the MBAs and new executive MBA and undergrads is getting up to probably the Northwestern level of total students, not counting undergraduate programs at those big schools.

INTERVIEWER: What was involved once you had your retreats and decided that it made sense to grow, and getting there, and how fast did you do it?

URBAN: Well, you had to scale-up the program, we had to hire new faculty so we could staff those. We had to work out arrangements with the provost in terms of financials and how we were going to pay for that, and where those tuition dollars were going to go, because we had also invest in some premium quality faculty. So we needed to keep some share of that additional revenue for our own development, and then a large share to MIT to support the School.

INTERVIEWER: You got there very quickly. It was within your term, I believe.

URBAN: Yeah. We always had a big backlog of qualified students. So with a little marketing and the backlog, we didn't have any trouble finding really qualified people. It was about then, also, that we rebranded the School, the MIT Sloan School of Management. Actually, that started when I was deputy dean with Lester Thurow. We designed a new logo with the dome, and put MIT in big letters, because we felt, as well as scale, the big advantage we had over the other schools was that we were integrated cross campus, and very few other business schools could claim that.

So we had the Leaders for Manufacturing program and a number of initiatives going on, and we felt that was a core strength to tap into. So it was that kind of integration, plus positioning, post marketing, plus good people that we got more enrollments, and, I think, better quality people, and, say, generated funds then to hire highly qualified faculty.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think they your expertise in marketing played any role in your selection as dean in 1993? Did the president or the provost or anyone else tell you they wanted you to market the Sloan School?

URBAN: I think the committee that selected the dean candidate, only put forth one name. I'm not sure the president had a lot of choice. I think the committee felt we needed to do a better job of marketing, and we needed someone there that would be not just marketing, but good overall, and someone who would be a kind of consensus manager. Because certainly, anything that happened during that period was due to a lot of key people working hard on the faculty and the staff to make it happen.

INTERVIEWER: And the committee was an internal Sloan committee or across the Institute?

URBAN: It was a Sloan Committee with -- yeah -- with alumni graduates and some outside faculty members, but they were charged to give the president nominations, and they exercised their prerogative. John Little was the chairman of that committee, and--

INTERVIEWER: And he didn't--

URBAN: --he's from marketing.

INTERVIEWER: --come back and say give me some more names.

URBAN: Yeah. Chuck could have come back and said give me some more names.

INTERVIEWER: So this was Chuck Vest?

URBAN: Yup.

INTERVIEWER: Did you apply your marketing expertise in any way as dean? Can you talk about whether and how you thought about somebody who had this kind of background?

URBAN: Yeah. Good marketing starts with the needs of your customer base. So we really wanted to study how those needs were changing, and we realized the ability to manage technology was critical, to be an innovator, to handle people, to be adaptive. So we really designed our curriculum around supporting those with kind of a leadership positioning, and probably moved a little bit away from the in-depth, specialization of technical skills. Not that we relaxed any of those requirements, but we said you should be good at technical, as well as be a leader, be able to handle people, understand the wide vision. So, to me that's the core of marketing is what are the needs, how do we map our strategy to them.

Once we had that, then some tactics came into play. We staffed up in PR to get the message out. We added an alumni relations to have customer satisfaction and built the alumni base, so that we have more support for graduating students, as well as contributions to the School. So I think kind of for me it was natural. It was marketing, but it was also strategy and operations. We needed people. We needed the finance structure behind it. And we got a lot of support from Chuck and the provost office.

So, it was really a very kind of cooperative effort across campus, and I think was about them, and I think we won the *US News,* number one award two or three years into the deanship. So, that was a lot of reinforcement. I think everybody felt good about that, that excellence hadn't been given up, that we had scale and some additional recognition.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of front-end investment did this require?

URBAN: Well, one of the nice things about having a backlog of students is you admit them and they start paying. If you want to hire faculty, it takes a while. So the cash flow was not a big problem. We were able to generate funds from the new students pretty quickly, and then we put that into reserve for star faculty and salaries that were competitive across the field. So that we were pretty much self-supporting that institute, and the Sloan School would negotiate a budget, and then incremental things are split between the School and the Institute by magic formulas that are negotiated and sometimes complex.

INTERVIEWER: And where were you putting all these new people?

URBAN: Well, this is when we opened the Tang Center. So we had to have the operations of the new classrooms there. Lester had started that as dean, and was about halfway through the fundraising, and we finished the fundraising, started the building. So, the Tang Center became a critical part to the classroom facilities, which were then much improved and could handle scale. The faculty offices were a little more a challenge, and we ended spreading faculty around, which is not good for intellectual interaction. That's why the new building at E62, now for the first time, I think since the founding of the School perhaps, all the faculty are in the same building.

INTERVIEWER: And you just moved in this week?

URBAN: This morning. Walked into my office and Dick Schmalensee walks by. I haven't seen Dick Schmalensee, because I've been in E40, which is a little cubbyhole, and before that another E60 building. So our group had been isolated for the last 10 years. So you suddenly realize that, and Dave Schmittlein walks by, Bob Pintti -- suddenly you realize this is going to be great. The space was designed for interaction. Tom Allen, who specializes in this, did a lot of the work with the committee to facilitate across-floor interaction. So, I think it's going to be a real intellectual boon for the School. It's a great facility and very nice, but I think the big gain's going to be intellectual cross-fertilization.

INTERVIEWER: Even more than has taken place--

URBAN: Yeah. I think before it was harder. This would mean easier and more of that.

INTERVIEWER: And is there room for people from other departments to come collaborate?

URBAN: There's a lot of collaborative spaces, but there aren't offices where people -- unless they come on leave. There are offices for people on leave that they could come there. But, as you probably know from space at MIT, you can only have one office and yet, we have a lot of meeting rooms and spaces, so I'm looking forward to that.

INTERVIEWER: Sloan dropped its thesis requirement for Master's candidates during your tenure as dean, even though the other Master's programs around MIT mostly had it still, I think. What was the thinking behind that, and was it a hard sell either in your department or outside of it, or in your school or outside of it?

URBAN: Well, again, this came out of discussions with large faculty groups. The thesis for some people was working, for some people it wasn't working. There was kind of a trend in MBA that some people want breathe across a lot of fields and perhaps not so much depth, and other people want depth. So what we basically did was make it optional, so that you could write a thesis if you'd like. Particularly for young MBAs coming in, many of them were looking for breadth. They had been three or four or five years in a specialty area, and come for the breadth. So, that was the thinking behind it and I think it worked pretty well, along with the views of having more time for leadership and more time for interpersonal interaction.

On the same side, we've kept the requirement for the Sloan Fellows, because they're middle managers, 35, they've had a lot of breadth. They really need at least one place where they go in depth. So it's kind of mapping the needs back into what we can deliver effectively. I think the ratings of the program generally went up when we made that option.

INTERVIEWER: And you changed it to an MBA, too.

URBAN: Well, we had that again as an option -- you could be an MS or an MBA.

INTERVIEWER: That had been--

URBAN: And the market--

INTERVIEWER: --that way for a while?

URBAN: --the market spoke. We allowed you to pick MBA or MS. So, people wrote a thesis, and who wanted to go, say, into operations research or production or part of Leaders for Manufacturing -- they really wanted the MS. Other people who went into broader management, found the MBA was a better door opener, and particularly since we had gotten feedback from a lot of the recruiters. They thought MIT people were too specialized and too narrow. This helped change that perception.

INTERVIEWER: Was it hard to win approval for these things from the rest of the Institute, or did they sort of say, oh, Sloan, they're so different, they can do whatever they want.

URBAN: Well, I never had any big push back from other departments. There's always a lot of discussion and involvement with the provost and the president, as we were going through that. And academic counsel would review these things. Sloan has a little different need space. It's a professional program, a Master's program. I think subsequently, computer science has created a Master's program, for example. So that's a little bit more similar.

Back when these were originally were done, the graduate degrees were basically PhDs, and if you got a Master's it was because you couldn't do the PhD. So we were really one of the first real professional degree schools.

INTERVIEWER: Architecture might have been another.

URBAN: Yeah, where you kind of did that. So, Bill Mitchell--

INTERVIEWER: And they, too, were probably seen as--

URBAN: Yeah, and Bill Mitchell and I were kind of kindred spirits in that respect of--

INTERVIEWER: Did you talk often about--?

URBAN: Yeah, the academic counsel was very interactive, and Phil Khoury and Bill Mitchell were very close to similar things. But Bob Birgeneau and I, and the science dean at that time had great discussions about strategy, and particularly, quality.

INTERVIEWER: So it wasn't just a question of the deans of the smaller schools getting together and comparing notes.

URBAN: I don't think so. We have long-time standings with engineering. I'm an engineer myself, mechanical engineer. So, I think maybe half the faculty and probably half the students who come are engineering trained, and then most of the undergraduates come from engineering and either major in management after they're here or double major or minor in management. Of course, Tom Magnanti became dean of engineering and he was a Sloan faculty member for most of his years. So that cemented those ties even more.

INTERVIEWER: Do most of the faculty or all of the faculty at Sloan have some interest in science and engineering, or do they pick it up while they're here or do some of them ignore it -- just they're here because it's a good business school or a good university?

URBAN: I think every faculty has a core discipline, and some of those are operations research or management science. But you have the economists, who you know well -- I don't know if you would call them economic science or engineering, but it's something between. And then the behavioral scientists are a big group. In fact, when the Sloan School started, the biggest group of people were the behavioral scientists, the organization theory people. So there's a long heritage for all three of those disciplines, and most people, they're research-oriented, using those disciplines are crossing over those disciplines. Particularly, in my field in marketing, a lot of use of behavioral science, along with statistics and economics principles.

INTERVIEWER: You talked about one of the challenges being to recruit new faculty. How many did you bring in, and where did you find them, and what fields -- what was it like?

URBAN: The faculty in each of the groups always wants to expand. So the problem for the dean's office is allocating the slots. Once the slots are allocated to an area, like we allocated slots to finance because we wanted to build the finance area, we thought it was a high productivity/research area between analytic modeling, and, of course, we had Bob Merton, and Myron Scholes here, so we had a core strength there and we wanted to maintain that.

So once you put that place and saw that those people recruit the PhDs that are out there -- if you can't find a young PhD, you try to get an untenured person. If you were in an area where there was no course, math, then you might go for a senior appointment to bring them in. So we never had trouble getting faculty enthusiasm to recruit, and once we talked to people -- a lot of people like Sloan small. It's kind of family. There's not a large compartmentalization of people with political battles. There's much more of kind of cross-fertilization. So, I think probably our empirical record of acceptance given offers has been very good.

INTERVIEWER: Did that number one ranking in *US News* help in recruiting faculty.

URBAN: Probably more recruiting students and alumni contributions. I think the faculty looks at an area, so they say do I want to go to MIT in finance. And they say, there's Andy Lo, great young guy -- I definitely want to be there. If they look at organization studies and they see that the heritage of Ed Schein and people, or operations research, or they're interested in manufacturing links across engineering.

So, probably the faculty look more at the academic reputation than the *US News*, but definitely the students, recruiters and alumni see those, and maybe other people across the Institute realize Sloan's doing good.

INTERVIEWER: So the faculty in your term grew from what to what? Do you remember?

URBAN: I'd have to look back exactly. But it's probably about 15 percent to 20 percent.

INTERVIEWER: And you brought in mostly young, untenured people?

URBAN: The objective was to bring in young untenured. Particularly, we were not very representative on women and minorities. So a very high priority on that. We got a lot of support from the Institute with funds being made available to hire those people. So I think kind of--

INTERVIEWER: And you were able to find women and minorities?

URBAN: In some areas it's more difficult than others, but I think today the Sloan School has a large number of really effective women tenured and young people coming in. So, I think it takes a while for the supply to come through and to work it through, but I think it's been very positive.

INTERVIEWER: Let's back up and talk about what happened before you got to MIT. Where were you born, and where did you grow up, and what were you like as a child?

URBAN: Well, small town, Central Wisconsin. I always remember it said Marathon County, and when you come into the Marathon County when I was a kid, there would be a sign and it would give the population of cows and the population of people. There were always more cows than people in Marathon County. But it also had employers Mutual Insurance Company, a paper industry. So it was a small, pretty sophisticated little town. Good high school. I went to the local University of Wisconsin extension center for two years. So my focus was perhaps not as wide. I must say.

INTERVIEWER: Could you have stayed all four or you had to move--

URBAN: No, that's only a two-year thing. Then you go to Madison, and went there and finished engineering and the MBA. So it was kind of a widening of horizons, I think. Probably MIT was not in my consideration set for a college.

INTERVIEWER: What did your parents do?

URBAN: My dad ran a construction business, urban steel buildings, and I worked every summer there. It was great engineering experience designing buildings of steel, but also, I ended up selling and doing a lot of the marketing. So it was a good -- I think it generated a lot of my interest in management, and particularly, combining engineering and management.

INTERVIEWER: And so you thought you would come back and work in the business?

URBAN: That seemed like the natural thing to do. But, as my dad said, "I over educated you." You got into too many things that were interesting. When I got to Madison I was interested in atomic power plant design, and took a lot of courses in that. Then atomic power plants got to be not so safe, not so productive a place to be.

I got interested in marketing and technology, took the MBA and got more interested in marketing. Then was encouraged to look at PhD programs, and found a couple -- Northwestern and Michigan -- and they had full support. So it was natural and met some great faculty there -- Phil Kotler at Northwestern, and facilitated kind of moving along.

INTERVIEWER: So, when you chose your majors in college, was it with an eye towards going back into your father's business--

URBAN: Yeah, I think so, yeah--

INTERVIEWER: --or was it what you were always interested in?

URBAN: It was engineering we needed, and marketing, I learned from the summer that we needed to sell these buildings against competition, and against wood, and against other steel buildings. So it seemed natural to do those two. Then as I got into marketing and realized some nice transfers in, and the opportunity opened up at Northwestern, I thought I should take that. About then dad gave up and said, well--. Then after PhD, MIT offer is pretty hard to refuse.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any siblings that went back into the business?

URBAN: No. I had a brother who was a computer scientist who went to Carnegie Tech, and he--

INTERVIEWER: Older brother?

URBAN: Older brother, yeah. So he went into control data at that time.

INTERVIEWER: So one of them had already flown the coop.

URBAN: Yeah. Roger, my brother, was really not a manager kind of guy-- he wasn't really interested in business. He's more technical, computer science.

INTERVIEWER: So, if power plants had continued to arise across the US, you might have gone into nuclear engineering?

URBAN: Maybe. But I think marketing, at the same, I started to do the MBA and joint work. When I was a senior in engineering, I started the MBA. So, the more I got into that, I just found engineering was really interesting, but there were a lot of big unsolved problems in marketing that kind of looked like it could use some of the statistics and modeling that we were doing, actually, in simulation of power plants. We had a computer in engineering at that point, it was a 1620 IBM, and I have more computer power on my iPhone today by some magnitude than the big 1620 that the University of Wisconsin had for all the engineering students.

INTERVIEWER: What marketing really grabbed you?

URBAN: Well, I always liked to -- in the business when I was working with my dad, I always liked the selling -- very satisfying to convince someone that this is the right thing, and I felt we had the right products. Then as I got into marketing, was the time that computers were coming into marketing. So, data analysis and--. As the computers came you could suddenly do regressions. Before that we used to have slide rules and be doing heuristic shortcuts to be able to do a regression.

So suddenly you could do forecasting and you could look at ROIs, things you did in marketing, and look at new products and say, what would I forecast and why do all these products fail? So it was really new products that kind of grabbed my attention. My Master's thesis was on product planning in the aerospace industry. Then when I got to Northwestern, Phil Kotler got me into Union Carbide, we did a lot of work on new chemical, then forecasting.

INTERVIEWER: Why the aerospace? How did you happen to fall into that?

URBAN: I think it was a flow out of atomic power plant and looking at kind of industrial high-tech, and kind of interested in new products and how people did it. An at that time, the defense industry was doing some very interesting proactive research, before the contracts, to understand needs and develop weapon systems for the military. So it kind of worked into my view of marketing, which is to understand those needs and how you can get early read on that.

INTERVIEWER: As you were going through school as an undergrad or through your Master's, did you think, oh, I've got a set of tools, I could go out and work and these would be really useful?

URBAN: Yeah. In fact, I did interview when I got my engineering degree at Trane, which was an air conditioning company, in Wisconsin. The same time, I was finishing the MBA, and I also applied to PhD programs. I remember I applied to GE and this GE guy said to me, he said, "You gotta decide what you want to be when you grow up." He said, "You can't work in GE and be a PhD, you gotta be one or the other -- you know do--."

INTERVIEWER: You told him that you were applying to the PhD programs.

URBAN: Yeah, and so he thought that was terrible that I was walking away from business. I kind of said, I really thought there's a synergy.

INTERVIEWER: He didn't say we'll send you to get your doctorate as long as you come back.

URBAN: No. I wasn't applying to R&D either. I'm sure in R&D they probably would do that. But this is more kind of product planning and new things at GE.

INTERVIEWER: So did a light bulb go off -- speaking of GE -- go off in your head where you said, gee, I really like this academic stuff?

URBAN: Yeah. I think I really liked the academics. Also, full transparency of what was happening at that time, that was the Vietnam War, and there was a definite choice. You either stayed in graduate school or did you chose a career in Vietnam. I thought I could use my skills more productively academically. So either you had to have a deferred job or be in graduate school, and even by the time I came here, the MIT system worked to be a deferred appointment.

INTERVIEWER: How did you choose Northwestern for your doctoral work? Did you apply to other places as well?

URBAN: Yeah, just two -- Michigan and Northwestern, both of which in the Big 10 are very good marketing schools. My wife was a music major, plays the organ, and both those are good schools for organ. So we kind of -- we were engaged at the time, so we put our thoughts together and looked at our options and scholarships and the people. I really liked Northwestern, so we chose that.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know Phil Kotler or know of his work?

URBAN: I knew of his work. He was actually an economics graduate from MIT, and had pioneered in the use of quantitative methods in marketing. So I seriously felt that was very much along where I wanted to go. In fact, I just edited a volume on Phil Kotler as a legend in marketing. It's interesting to trace back and talk to him about 45 years ago or 46 years ago.

INTERVIEWER: Have you stayed in touch with him all those years?

URBAN: Oh yeah, sure.

INTERVIEWER: Has he ever come over back to MIT?

URBAN: Yeah, he has, and he had a 75th birthday recently which I was out for. So we reminisce. I think he very much was bringing kind of economics and statistics.

INTERVIEWER: So he had a doctorate in economics from MIT?

URBAN: Yup.

INTERVIEWER: Then went--

URBAN: Not that far before you.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think you would have studied these same disciplines had your father not owned that business? Do you ever think about if you had just come into college--

URBAN: What would I have gone into?

INTERVIEWER: --in a more neutral way? Yeah.

URBAN: I think I was always interested in engineering. I was with a group of 8 or 10 guys in high school who all were kind of science/engineering oriented. In fact, we all went to this local extension center which had just opened. It turned out to be a great undergraduate education, because there would be 10 of us in physics and 10 of us in chemistry, and a professor from Madison kind of retired back to this extension. It was new facilities, and great calculus, great linear algebra. So, it was kind fortuitous. So probably I would have.

INTERVIEWER: This was mechanical engineering that you--

URBAN: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did you tinker with stuff growing up? Did you play with--

URBAN: Yeah, to some extent. Because my dad was in the steel building business, I worked on the crew, and you were welding and building steel frames. It was a little more civil and mechanical --

INTERVIEWER: So you never thought about architecture as a--

URBAN: It's interesting, I didn't. I probably, subsequently--

INTERVIEWER: Because you sculpt now--

URBAN: Yeah, I think about kind of the artistic side. I think those days it was more functional.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think your engineering background proved useful to you in any way being an MIT professor?

URBAN: Oh, absolutely. I mean this is an engineering school, so engineers kind of really want to make things work and do things. So I always, in marketing, the things I did, I always wanted to build tools that marketers could use to really solve problems. Probably in my academic group, I'm viewed as kind of the engineering side of the field rather than the science side of the field. There's a little bit of rivalry in the field between the scientists -- some economists who are theory-driven, saying, well, you're just an engineer. Of course, the engineer sides as well. At least what we do is relevant. Helps the--

INTERVIEWER: So you think your engineering inclination made you approach the topic differently from some other people in it and maybe influenced some of the research topics?

URBAN: Absolutely. I'm probably more problem-driven. So I get out and talk to managers and see problems and big needs and say, all right, let's see if we can do that. I remember once with Gillette, they were talking about how new products fail at Gillette, and they were losing millions of dollars every time a test market failed. This is market research [INAUDIBLE] said, well, why don't you build a system that can predict new product sales before we launch? I said well, that's impossible.

I've been working on test markets, they're very complex, there's diffusion renovation -- everything's going-- he said, well, how about if we give you an exploratory grant at MIT to look at this and we'll cooperate with you. So I said, great, let's do that. So, Al Silk, another colleague and I, started working on it and we developed a laboratory procedure where you could show people products and ads and measure behavioral characteristics and repeat purchase and use of diffusion modeling to predict. It turned out to work very well.

INTERVIEWER: You started with products like razors or what?

URBAN: Yeah. Shampoos, shave creams, they were consumer packaged goods.

INTERVIEWER: This wasn't being done before?

URBAN: No. People would do a test market and they would spend 18 months and millions of dollars, and then more than half would fail. So, this was a three month procedure that cost much less and was much more reliable. It's actually become kind of a standard in the field. That one was called Assessor, but there are a number of copies now in the field, the Bases, and others that use that same technology we developed here.

But it was, to your point, driven by the problem, and because of that -- I think you were in economics about the same time when Dan McFadden was developing logit analysis. We were using logit analysis as the first application in marketing before Dan had developed maximal likelihood. We were using heuristics. And that once we had the maximal likelihood, we used that to estimate the preference models. So, the problem spawned a lot of cross-fertilization and innovation that then became a major contribution to the academic side.

INTERVIEWER: Was it exciting?

URBAN: Oh, absolutely. Great fun.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever try to make a business out of it, or did you just go on to the next problem?

URBAN: Well, I always had a view that we should impact practice. It was clear that this journal of marketing publication was not taking off with the market research firms. So actually, with John Little, and Len Lodish, one of our students, we formed a little company called Management Decision Systems, and some of the graduates who had left before came and worked. Eventually that company sold I think maybe 2,000 of these packaged goods studies over a 10 year period.

So it really had an impact, and then it was copied by people who left our company and went to another company. My role was kind of bringing ideas in, and on the board, and then these students took it and made it into a real company.

INTERVIEWER: You've called the recent decades an exciting time for marketing science. In what ways? I mean this is one thing that was you--

URBAN: I guess it's always been exciting. The start out with computers enabling a lot of things. Then Assessor was kind of bringing across some behavioral concepts and logit analysis and diffusion of innovation. The next things we did were related to durables, and '80s and '90s on electric cars and trying to predict would it be a success or not. So, we developed something called Information Acceleration, which used the latest computer technologies.

At that time MacroMind Director was a big 14-inch disk that stored data, and we created a simulator of the shopping experience and the dealership experience. GM built prototypes that we could have people drive, and we measured all these things and accelerated kind of the future to, in that case, 1992, to forecast the sales in California of the EV1.

So that was exciting, because then all the computer psychology, behavioral economics. It turns out that was one of the instrumental studies with GM EV2 that said this is probably not the right vehicle -- that you should be building hybrids. GM subsequently tried to leap frog that with hydrogen, and that got delayed, which led them to lose a share of the Prius, which was a hybrid. It turned out Prius took our publication on information acceleration and did it themselves and forecast the sales of Prius with that methodology.

So that was kind of the ultimate compliment that you can publish something, somebody else can take it and replicate it and use it in a positive way. So that was exciting. Then the whole internet came about around the '90s and 2000. So we have all these new issues on the internet. So, I would just say the last 10 years, it's kind of been pretty exciting ever since I started in the field.

INTERVIEWER: Your Gillette example you talked about, helping them move from an 18 month process to a three month process, it sounds like some of what you were doing is looking more systematically at the information that was available. Were there other keys to speeding it up, or simply saying you just don't need to wait so long or gather so much data or something?

URBAN: I think the measurement was very different. They would put it in a test market and watch sales grow, trial, grow. What we were doing as a laboratory. So you take the product and you force people's awareness, and you say here's the ads for this product and competition. Now here's a simulated store. You can buy any of these products you want with the money we've given you to be part of this interview. If you don't buy it we're going to give it to you anyway and measure your use afterwards. So it was forced exposures and then you used a model to build awareness by past historic relationships, and trial repeat models for diffusion, and logit models for share given the trial.

So it was a whole different measurement and modeling system than kind put it out there and simulated in the real market.

INTERVIEWER: Where did your ideas come from? How did you think, hm, let's invent this. Can you describe--

URBAN: Well, I think you get out there and kind of say what can we do, and you look at what Dan was doing at that time, you look at other kinds of marketing research that was being done. There was a lot of advertising testing where you forced exposures. So we started to put the pieces together, and then there's sort of some creative spark that happens and you kind of say, ah, this is a way to go, let's move that way more. Probably very similar to engineering design where you're solving a complex problem. You've got theory and you've got tools, but you follow things down and you occasionally get a blithe of insight.

INTERVIEWER: Was it hard to sell it to Gillette? Were there people who were skeptical?

URBAN: Well, because they had brought the problem, that market research director had no problem. They did eight test cases with products that were going national. They did, in parallel with the test market, the Assessors, and so we had eight validation studies. And we could have got like 0.09 correlation between actual share and predicted share. So they were very cooperative.

INTERVIEWER: Did you hold your breath or lose any sleep while you were waiting for the first result?

URBAN: You always hope they work. It turns out marketing is more difficult, because you think of an engineering problem, you count your inventory or you measure your pieces of steel, but in consumers, they change and you don't have very good measurements and precision. So they're wider variances on everything, so you're living with the correlations.

We did a second paper where we've applied Bayesian Decision Theory to those reliabilities to say if they weren't perfect, they were what we observed, 0.09 correlation. How much is it worth to have this tool, and how many times will you get the wrong answer -- false positives and false negatives? Where should you set the cut-off value to optimize that? It turned out, if you optimize the cut-off value and set it, you would have a very high value, more products, lower cost coming through the system.

INTERVIEWER: You talk about a "we." It sounds like there's a lot of collaboration. Is that a common thing in consulting or fairly unusual?

URBAN: I don't know about in consulting, but in research definitely it was. Most all my papers, I really worked with our team -- Al Silk on this Assessor project, John Hauser, who is a senior professor in marketing. He's probably my most common co-author. John Little, who's the author of Little's Law, and OR, was probably my mentor and we worked very closely with him, but not so much on doing publications. But he is OR background, and advice were always critical, and then a lot of other Sloan professors. Eric Von Hippel who worked on lead user innovation -- built that in. We worked with Dan on his material. So, yeah, it's always been -- for me, I found it quite good to interact.

INTERVIEWER: Have you done much with professors or students from other schools at MIT, or has it been mostly people within Sloan?

URBAN: I think mostly within Sloan. Certainly have had a lot of discussions with people. As we go through these processes, it's a lot of interaction with the media lab, but not so much on joint projects. But rather implementing media lab technologies in my kinds of problems. A lot of this trust and morphing work comes out of things that the media lab had helped developed these technologies. I kind of see myself taking technologies, melding them with problems and creating solutions.

INTERVIEWER: You talked about getting into the whole business area and marketing during the Vietnam turmoil, which was also a period when lots of young people were running away from business. I think business schools saw enrollments or applications fall somewhat. Were you aware of that kind of disenchantment? And do you have any sense of why you somehow escaped it, and yet others felt like [INAUDIBLE]?

URBAN: Yeah, well, you couldn't not see it. At that point, the Herman Building on the fourth floor had the center for political science. I can't remember the -- do you remember the exact name? Center for International Studies.

INTERVIEWER: CIS, yeah, Studies.

URBAN: During that student unrest, some students planted a bomb in the men's room, only they planted it on the wrong floor, on the third floor. My office happens to be on the third floor. So, yeah, when a bomb goes off near your office, you really know what's going on. I think peoples' views about how to cope with that vary. I felt kind of a lot more social conscience about wider issues, not just the war. So at that time, we were doing a lot of work on family planning. In fact, I worked on a model to forecast new family planning programs, and I had been visiting in India, in Calcutta.

So, I think my social conscience got channeled more towards public health and family planning. And a lot of the Sloan graduates at that time -- I was the head of the public management part of the Sloan program in those early '70s. We had about 20 percent to 25 percent of the people majoring in public sector management.

In fact, a couple of those doctors -- Ron O'Connor. MBA Joel Lamstein and I formed a company called Management Science for Health -- a non-profit company to bring management to the public health area in developing countries. Those guys have gone on to be very successful companies, and they probably have 3,000 people worldwide working on AIDS and family planning.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get hired at MIT? You had been at Northwestern working on your doctorate with Phil Kotler.

URBAN: Yeah, that's kind of an interesting story. I went there in my second year, the fall, Phil said, well, I've got some people at Union Carbide who -- it might be an interesting area for testing your new product forecasting models. I said, great, and I went out and talked to them and we got some data together. By about January I said, well, I'm going to write this up as a first draft of the thesis. I think it was by April, we had this done.

My wife and I strapped our skis on the car -- we had a little Triumph at the time. We're heading out to Aspen, Colorado, and I said, OK, we'll drop this off. So went out to the thesis committee and dropped off this mimeographed -- I don't know if you remember the days when you had mimeographs with purple ink on the back. If you wanted to correct it you took a razor blade and scraped off the back of the paper. And we turned out all this paper.

Went out skiing, came back, and I remember one of my marketing professors, Dick Cluett said, well, you're not going to turn in a thesis like this. I kind of said well, it probably needs a lot of work. And he said that these table formats are all wrong. You've got to clean this up before we can accept it. Phil Kotler thought it was good. So I said, OK, why don't you graduate? Then, of course, well, who would I get a job with at this time of year? So Phil called around and we talked to Stanford, and MIT was looking. So I came out to MIT--

INTERVIEWER: And they were looking for a marketing person.

URBAN: Marketing professor, John Little and Arnie Amstutz were looking. They hadn't found anybody and I came out and had an interview and they said, well, why don't you come? So there I was.

INTERVIEWER: Did you think hard at all about do I want to be in Boston or do I want to be at MIT, or was it just--

URBAN: Oh, MIT was a very exciting place. Sloan School was exciting at that point, too. John Little was young, Little's Law, OR and marketing, and John had just really moved from kind of OR per se to marketing, and kind of an inspiration of saying, look, these problems are really important, we need to work on them. Other young people there, we were starting -- MIT had Project Mac, and Online was there, and it was a perfect match to the kind of things I was looking for.

INTERVIEWER: Were you aware of most of that when you were approached?

URBAN: Yeah. I mean you know the people in the field because you've been reading it, and of course, Phil was from MIT.

INTERVIEWER: He knew people here.

URBAN: He knew people here and could call John, and talk to them.

INTERVIEWER: You came I think in 1966, which would have been just about the time that the Sloan School dean had become president of MIT.

URBAN: Yup. Well, I remember interviewing -- Bill Pounds was in operations research at that time on that same floor in the Hermann Building. I talked to him, and then I met Howard Johnson and Howard was the dean. I think it was probably a couple months later, Howard was packing up to leave and he -- Federated Department Store-- and got the call from the MIT Corporation Committee, and he became president and Bill became dean. So, it was kind of fun to be in at that point in the School.

INTERVIEWER: I wonder how unusual it was for a university to be run by a business school person, whether there were very many other presidents at that point who came out of-- and Howard was somewhat unusual in that he didn't have a doctorate. Do you think MIT--

URBAN: You know, you have a unique choice. You've probably talked to Howard and have the background on how they selected Howard, but I think Howard did a good job at Sloan, and was a good manager. Apparently, the committee felt needed a little more management--

INTERVIEWER: Did you have much in the way of conversation with him over the years he was president?

URBAN: You know, Howard was always kind of an inspiration. I was a young faculty member, and then trying to get publications out. But when I became dean, Howard was particularly valuable in bringing a lot of wisdom to bear.

INTERVIEWER: He was on the Corporation at that point.

URBAN: He was chairman of the Corporation. I remember we had a dinner at my house with all the living deans -- that was when I first started, it was one of the first things I did. So that helped me be able to access their skills. I consider Howard a good friend.

INTERVIEWER: What were your first impressions of MIT? You thought this looks good, I'll go there, and then you got here and what?

URBAN: Well, it's an overwhelming place. Here you're sitting in marketing in a business school, which is not the highest prestige level of the intellectual power of MIT. So I think I felt very humbled and kind of insecure. But it was a colleagueship of, I think there were 10 young professors hired when I came in.

INTERVIEWER: For Sloan.

URBAN: For Sloan. So we had a very good peer group across operations and finance and organization studies. I had good mentoring. Bill had just come on, he was only 36 I think or something at the time he became dean. John Little was a great colleague. So, I felt, get to work, see what happens. John always said it's a good place to be from.

INTERVIEWER: Engineers and scientists had to go out and get grants to help pay for their labs and their assistance and their salaries. Did you in the Sloan School have to do that as a young professor?

URBAN: Probably not to the degree that it happens in engineering. I did do things like these Gillette projects, and Nabisco we had sponsored research projects. But it would have been conceivable at Sloan at that time to pay all your salary by teaching. And if you do more research then you get time off from teaching, and so you have more time to do research. So there was kind of a leverage to getting those grants. I think my problem-solving approach probably lent itself to that.

So I probably always had considerable funding and be able to support a pretty significant research team. Probably not the scale of engineering, but I probably, like in the last five years, averaged maybe 8 to 10 RAs working on four to five projects over those periods.

INTERVIEWER: But when you started out, what did you teach?

URBAN: Well, I was teaching basic marketing.

INTERVIEWER: Undergrad or graduate?

URBAN: Graduate. At that point, the undergraduates kind of took the same course, and they were really very good, of course. Most of the Sloan Master's students came right out of undergraduate. There wasn't the five year requirement that we have now. Many more of them are engineers. So it was actually easier to teach quantitative content, I think then than it is now. I teach statistics courses, statistics for model building, experimentation courses, and I developed a new products course -- designing/marketing new products.

INTERVIEWER: Did you find that most of your students were pretty capable on the quantitative skills, or did you have to bring some of them up to speed?

URBAN: No, probably they were all, because of their engineering background, all very strong. You probably were more on bringing in the kind of customer orientation and behavioral measurement side of the picture.

INTERVIEWER: And did you start picking up doctoral students pretty quickly?

URBAN: You did, but the Sloan School had kind of a quota of number of doctoral students, which has never been super high. So, in marketing we might have one or maybe two PhD students a year admitted, and there were four or five faculty. So, younger faculty often had a more difficult time.

INTERVIEWER: Why the limits? Because you were paying for them or not?

URBAN: Yeah, there were big -- because in management there's a lot of competition for the PhD students, and so schools offer very lucrative packages, and you can only afford so many lucrative packages. Even today, the Sloan School probably is more restricted in the number of PhDs than you might find in engineering where if you have the research money you can probably -- I don't know for sure -- but you can probably get your PhD student in.

INTERVIEWER: Was there enough critical mass there if you only had one or two?

URBAN: I think so. We probably used Master's students more intensively than other departments at that point.

INTERVIEWER: Even for the students, I wonder if there was enough community of other people in the same position they were.

URBAN: That's always an issue. Maybe that's why we work so closely. One of my first PhD students was John Hauser who's now a senior professor. John Little and I worked with John, and actually John and I wrote our first joint paper spinning off of some of the doctoral work. So I didn't feel too constrained about that. I think that it was supporting.

INTERVIEWER: Schools of business are often somewhat removed from the rest of a university. Harvard, I guess, is a good example, especially since they basically focus on graduate students and don't offer undergraduate degrees in business. Do you think Sloan students and faculty are less in a silo than a place like Harvard Business School?

URBAN: Well, we certainly develop that as a positioning. As I kind of said earlier, that's a critical advantage. So, if you look at the programs that are now in place, system design management. We have a lot of Sloan faculty associated with that Operations Research Center -- big interaction. Political science, one of our deputies just became dean of political science. Organization studies have always had ties to the behavioral science areas.

INTERVIEWER: Is there more integration than when you first came, do you think?

URBAN: Yeah. Economics is one that's always been strong. Of course, Franco Modigliani was in the Sloan School -- very much part of the Solow/Samuelson peer group. That was probably one of the earlier ones. But then I think the engineering ties strengthened over time. And the Energy Lab where we have a lot of people working, brain and cognitive science now -- one of my colleagues in marketing is a joint appointment with brain and cog, and doing fMRI studies on trust in marketing problems.

INTERVIEWER: fMRI? Whatever.

URBAN: It's Functional Magnetic--

INTERVIEWER: Resonance?

URBAN: Nuclear FMR. Magnetic Resonance--

INTERVIEWER: OK. How do you think your experience as a business school student at Wisconsin and Northwestern compares to student experiences here?

URBAN: Well, it's a long time ago. I think Wisconsin MBA was at that time a good MBA, but basic functional things. MIT at that time was probably more industrial oriented. I think the original school name in the 1950s was the School of Industrial Management. I think it was when I came here. It became Sloan School of Management by Howard Johnson later when the Sloan money had run out. I think Howard renamed it the Sloan School and hoped that the Sloan Foundation would give us more money, which they never did.

So, I think the Sloan School widened over time. Northwestern, Wisconsin, also, I think widened over time to be schools of management and looking at probably the more similar model of disciplines plus advanced studies. At that time, Harvard was case-oriented, as opposed to the discipline orientation of MIT. Probably over time, Harvard and MIT have become more alike. We do more cases now than we did in those days; Harvard does more basic disciplines. Harvard now has a research faculty, per se, and we do a lot more case writing. So, I think all the business schools have kind of widened and grown over time.

INTERVIEWER: Have students at MIT changed much since you first arrived?

URBAN: Well, that's a good question. I think the MBAs have changed. They're older, more experienced, they're interested in a lot more broader issues. So, when I came, if I had an MBA, I could give them a statistics task and have them do it. Today, the MBA's probably not going to be that kind of skilled statistician, but they're going to be great project managers. So when I do my projects now, I tend to use MBAs for kind of the project management interface with the client companies. I tend to use more cross-campus people for the analytic fields.

INTERVIEWER: The undergraduates.

URBAN: Undergraduates or Master's students. I usually have a couple of undergraduates each year, and I've had on average, three computer science Master's students each year. So they come in and they're doing the programming for the web or the kind of stimuli we use for our research, and they tend to want to get a little more breadth, so they like to do data and statistics. So I often take them and move them more out of just programming to looking at the statistics. In fact--

INTERVIEWER: Did some of them then branch into management and marketing?

URBAN: Well, in fact, one Clarence Lee is now a PhD student at Harvard in marketing. I had another computer science student this spring who said, OK, I want to apply for PhD programs, he said, but I can't decide whether I want to be an entrepreneur or a PhD. In the end, he went entrepreneur. But I told him if this venture doesn't work out, he's always welcome to come back as a PhD student.

INTERVIEWER: The Sloan School grants undergraduate degrees in business. Do you think business is a good discipline for undergraduates to study, and is it even a discipline?

URBAN: Well, it's an applied area. Not that far off from an engineering field. So, the undergraduate is really different than an MBA Sloan. Undergraduate is really a discipline strength degree. So you do develop competence in statistics and OR, or in-depth competence in operations management. You aren't taking the broad policy courses. It's not an MBA for undergraduates. It's really a kind of undergraduate bachelor of science degree where you're looking at the tools and analytics that are necessary for business.

So I think they're quite different, and in that respect, they're a good preparation for someone who, say, is combining it with engineering, who wants to go into an engineering department and bring management to bear, or in product design. So, I think there can be some very high leverage from that, particularly when it's combined together with an underlying skill.

INTERVIEWER: Do Sloan people ever get scolded by administrators or fellow faculty who say there's a shortage of good scientists and engineers in this country, and here you are giving the undergraduates a way out to study something else other than science and engineering?

URBAN: I haven't personally had that happen. You hear about people having that sentiment. Mostly what I found was that, particularly when you're talking about adding management to an engineer, most people say, well, that's probably a good idea, because you're going to affect the overall productivity of the engineering function, not just conducting engineering projects. I think the whole systems design management area reflects that kind of shift in engineering to more integration, more understanding of management issues. Leaders for Manufacturing was another example where a great dual degree, two Master's degrees in engineering and management really make a very potent change agent.

So, I think within limits, people kind of view this as a very valuable function. Of course, students have something to say about this. So it's not a lot of people coming to MIT are pushed into science and technology. Then they realize maybe there are other areas they want to supplement that with, and so Sloan is a natural to kind of bring that extra portfolio skill in. Then certainly you could look at some of our undergraduates who have gone on to be a success, and the big donors to MIT. They did develop that management capability.

INTERVIEWER: You've talked about being project-oriented in your research and opportunistic to some extent. Are there other considerations that you'd take into account in deciding whether this is a project you do want to undertake, or that you don't want to undertake?

URBAN: Yeah, that's an interesting research style question. There a lot of projects that come across your desk that are really consulting kind of things -- applying existing knowledge. Those would be ones I wouldn't undertake as research. If the problem that comes by has an interesting aspect, like an interesting technology or an interesting theoretical proposition, or it's important but not unsolved, then I get very intrigued by that.

So like the Assessor example, an unsolved problem, important -- well, let's put some resource there to see if we can break through on it. Other things, like the internet where we have role of trust, it's kind of a view that in theory trust is really important. You know, how do you build trust on the internet, it's not just security and privacy, although those are important, it's also how the system communicates, how effectively it generates a mutuality of trust. So that's an interesting issue where you can bring cross-field knowledge in.

The latest work on cognitive style, again, kind of says well, how do you make websites effective? I looked at websites and I realized they were very confusing -- there were tabs and options and it was very complex. I could see certain people liking that, particularly, IT programmers who are analytic and very detail-oriented. But then I saw other people who didn't relate at all. They were looking more for imagery and overall. That got me into looking at cognitive style as a behavioral concept, and how you bring a different styles of analytic versus holistic and deliberative versus impulsive and visual and verbal to bear on website design.

That kind of led to use of some AI technologies, machine learning, where you try to say, how do I find out someone's cognitive style? Well, I could ask you 20 questions and I can understand your style, but you're not going to answer those questions on the web. So, the breakthrough was to kind of take click stream as it occurs, and impute your cognitive style from how you interact with the site. Then change the site dynamically through machine learning, experimentation with something called Gittin's Algorithm to look at what the next best page would be for you and converge to a definition of your style and the best page for your style. That ended up being morphing. So it kind of organically grew out of combining theory and technology together with a problem.

INTERVIEWER: Are you very -- it sounds like you've liked computers for a long time -- you were doing them back in college where they were so prevalent.

URBAN: It's a great enabler, and we were doing some of the early applications of Project Mac work at Sloan. Then as computers got bigger and faster, we were doing bigger databases, combining that with measurement, and doing simulation modeling. Then, of course, the internet breakthrough really revolutionized marketing into new communication vehicles and new kinds of approaches to how you make these decisions of should you be on the web, should you not?

Should I do any old advertising? Is TV advertising obsolete or should it still have some proportion of my budget and how much? That got you into, well, what's the role of brands versus search advertising and final choice decision. So, it's kind of not just the computer, but the computer as it becomes a critical element in the strategy of the company to design and to market its efforts.

INTERVIEWER: Are there a lot of people in marketing, particularly in the business schools looking at questions like this? Or did you find that you were sort of out in front just because you had a higher comfort level with machines and engineering than other marketing people?

URBAN: I think probably maybe a third of all academic marketers are in this area of what you call marketing science, OR, MS. Then another third are behavioral science, and another third are drawing primarily from economics. So this marketing science area really did develop with the computer in the '60s. Then we have an organization called The Institute for Marketing Science, which is part of OR and MS. Dave Montgomery, who was then a professor here, organized the first conference of that group, and maybe 100 people -- I was just in Cologne and there were over 1,000 at the same conference now. So a lot of that interest.

INTERVIEWER: You've said that you're a research planner, that you lay out your research intentions over one and five year time horizons. But it also sounds like you're very good at taking one thing as it leads to something else and something else. How do you square the two, and how well does this planning work, and do you have a plan now?

URBAN: I find myself drawing a diagram with the Gantt chart -- here's the projects I'm doing and here's the scale on which you're going. I group them into areas. So, like this web morphing would be an area, and we have three or four different projects with. One was GM, and Suruga Bank, and Liberty Mutual. That's produced three publications. So that's been over maybe five years, and that's kind of phasing out.

But out of that morphing process has come my underlying problem of new media versus old media. We did a study of morphing banners for General Motors -- a funded project -- where we found if banners matched your cognitive style, as if you're visual and holistic, you had kind of a traditional ad banner. But if you're an analytic deliberative, you had a banner that looked much more like a website with lots of options. It turned out pre-post in kind of test control situation, we ended up with maybe 30 percent more click through when you matched the cognitive style. So, that got me thinking, well, how do we balance banners versus search advertising? Should we put our money in Google or should we put it into banners that are customized?

That started to unfold and new area, which is the current research plan which I call meta analysis. What we found was that there's so many different types of new media that it's very difficult to design an experiment, because it would be two by two by two by two by two, and it would be a huge sample size. So as I was looking at that problem, I suddenly realized that there was an analogy between this and medical clinical trials. When you do large-scale drug clinical trials, they use what they call meta analysis. But it's called perspective meta analysis. They put out specs for the study and standards, and then people around the world run clinical trials. Then they analyze across these trials to get large sample and become big science result.

So my current plan is to take that perspective meta analysis analogy and apply it to marketing, and have people do clinical trials with groups of people pre-post on new media and old media -- control being traditional advertising and maybe search advertising versus apps or banners. So that kind of flowed out of a five-year program on morphing. And morphing's kind of -- I'm considering that ending as we're writing up these last papers. This whole meta analysis has started flowing out.

Morphing came out of a five-year program on trust -- what determines trust? How do you build trust on a website? One of the things that built trust what cognitive style matching. Because as you talk to somebody, if you say we're on the same wavelength, you suddenly are trusting them more.

In fact, the last project on the trust I'd mentioned was this fMRI project with Drouche and Prelick, and what we found was that the more an advisor looks like you, the more you trust them. His study was based on morphing the advisor's image with your image. So he has you in the fMRI and you're doing tasks, risk-based tasks, and he found that people will follow the advice of the advisor the more it looks like them, as long as it's less than 50 percent like that. Because if you're over 50 percent you recognize yourself and you know something's happening. But it turns out mental processes are subtle. So, under 50 percent you can't recognize but you react.

That's the kind of research interesting problems lead to -- new disciplines being added which flow into new problems.

INTERVIEWER: Have you applied any of this to MIT and its website or the Sloan School and its website? Do you look at things and say, oh, I know something that would help?

URBAN: I've made that offer. It turns out I think people feel pretty confident in their website design themselves. So every time--

INTERVIEWER: Would you do anything if you could simply take them and--

URBAN: I would do it very differently. I would create a very simple backbone and then have it learn your cognitive style and adapt your learning and cognitive style. But that would take a lot of my time and research time, so it would have to be funded by someone. The level of interest wasn't that high.

INTERVIEWER: MIT are pretty satisfied with what they've got now.

URBAN: I think so. Probably people have, I find it, website, and have a long list of must-dos, and then there's a set of nice-to-dos. Morphing would be kind of on the top of the nice-to-do, but they never get through their must-dos. So it really takes somebody who wants to take an innovator's position to do that.

INTERVIEWER: When you were dean, you were then a member of MIT's Academic Council with the president and the provost, which gives you a front row to MIT's inner workings. Was there anything that surprised you when you entered that inner sanctum?

URBAN: It was one of things I'd hoped would be a learning experience, because I had a lot of experience at Sloan School, but not in science and engineering as it's managed. Being on the Academic Council, particularly when Chuck Vest ran it, it was a very open discussion of all the major issues. So there was a lot of learning about what different problems are in science and engineering.

Probably one of my biggest shocks was the tenure process. Everyone on the Academic Council reads every case for tenure in every department. So, suddenly I'm reading theoretical physics resumes and papers and trying to discuss them intelligently with everyone who's there. That was a great learning experience, but one that was particularly challenging and makes you realize what you do know and don't know and when you should act on it.

But I think the decision-making process, when I first came on the Academic Council, that was when the government funding for research was going down. One of the ideas, which I brought to the Sloan School was more partnering with industry, and that led to a discussion in the Academic Council, and Joel embraced that idea and Chuck, the Partnership in Research program. And like 10 years after, I was the head a the task force to evaluate that. It turned out to be a hugely successful program involving thousands of students and RAs, and trading a lot of very positive things.

So, I think my experience in Academic Council was more of synergy and new ideas. Clearly, engineering's the biggest resource pool, science next, so we were a small player. So, it was kind of a balancing of different priority for different parts of the School. But I always felt a considerable degree of support for the Sloan School and it moving forward, and I think everybody took ideas as they came up and discussed them in a positive way. But clearly--

INTERVIEWER: So the deans of the three smaller schools really had a voice and that council -- you weren't just second-class citizens.

URBAN: No. Phil Khoury's now chancellor. Larry Bacow was in kind of--

INTERVIEWER: Associate provost.

URBAN: Associate provost. Larry Bacow went on to be chancellor. And was part of that group and came out of a small school also.

So, I think a considerable president for taking people's opinion and looking at it. But in the end, I think Chuck made his decisions and trade-offs, as a leader should.

INTERVIEWER: In a process like the tenuring decisions, how much is it a matter of trusting the expertise of the people who really knew what a tenure candidate's file was about, and how much could you say I have good instincts and there's something wrong here, even though I'm not an expert in that field?

URBAN: Well, you clearly have to take the expertise of the field, string theory and physics. You've got letters from people in the field of what that's about. But I think you do get to be pretty good at reading letters and seeing what's between the lines, and particularly what's lacking in the letter, what's not there. So it causes you to ask a question. I think, frankly, any dean has a range of cases when they bring them up from really outstanding to, well, this one's kind of on the line.

So, in the Academic Council process there's a lot of sensing of where the ones that are maybe not so strong and asking intelligent questions about is this really one you want to push through or not? Is this the right thing to do? But most of the time, the deans take this very seriously and prepare their cases, and there are subcommittees who review these very carefully. So it's a--

INTERVIEWER: Did that take a major portion of the Academic Council's time or not really -- two months a year?

URBAN: Well, I think it happened at a particular time of year, but it would be a couple of days, full days, of meetings, plus you're preparing and reading cases. So it's a significant--

INTERVIEWER: For your own school, right?

URBAN: Yeah. And also, reading the cases for the other schools that you would discuss.

INTERVIEWER: What were some of the other big, important issues for the Institute during your deanship and your membership on the Academic Council?

URBAN: Well, let's see, I mentioned the one which was the research funding going down, which led--

INTERVIEWER: Were you able to think through answers, solutions to that problem?

URBAN: I think that developed the partnership program that Chuck embraced, and people like Ford and other people became major partners under that program.

I think about other things. I mean I think there was a lot of attention to kind of the equity in the personnel process, the proportion of women on the faculty. That issue was coming up, which became very salient in science. Subsequent to that, the role of minorities. I think there was a lot of discussion of that, but it proved to be kind of a difficult problem.

INTERVIEWER: It was harder to make--

URBAN: To find a solution. It was just not too obvious what the exact solution was. But we created incentives to try to get people to look more widely to hire those. I think of how far the world's come in this last year. In the marketing group we hired a young black woman in marketing, and she was from Harvard, she's a brilliant lady and doing great work.

We had her in the interviewing process and we were about to make an offer, and someone called from the provost saying, you've got to look at Rene Richardson. And we said, we already are. We have the offer out. So, you kind of realized that the world is moving forward and making progress. But that was a big problem. It took a lot of attention, and I think over time.

Of course, finance was always an issue of grants and alumni relations. I remember times with Bob Birgeneau presenting to his alumni groups and he would present to some of my alumni groups. A lot more involvement of visiting committees across the Institute to tie in the alumni and the giving and the resources. Because I think MIT and everyone got caught a little bit with a little more risk than they had hoped in these latest crisis, and we're having to work through that. We didn't have that degree of problem, although the decline in research funding was a major financial stress.

Then, of course, the undergraduate program, policies on undergraduates got talked about a lot. Revision of that program. And there were some difficult cases of problems with drinking, use of dorms, building of dorms, Chuck's-- outcome was a lot more freshman dorms, a lot more people on campus. So the wide range of issues, and I think intelligently addressed and worked on over that time.

INTERVIEWER: It sort of armed you to go back to your school and be up to speed on the issues.

URBAN: I was always willing to, and I felt welcome to bring Sloan issues there for comments from people, too.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any in particular that you did that with where you think it was useful?

URBAN: The kind of places where we wanted to build ties across the Institute were ones we brought there. Of course, they came back the other way. Joel was very interested in systems design management and that tied back. I had worked on the--

INTERVIEWER: Joel Moses.

URBAN: Yeah. I've worked on Leaders for Manufacturing program with Joel before that. So there were a lot of positive ties coming through.

INTERVIEWER: One other thing you did as dean was to set up an art gallery at the Sloan School. What made you think of doing that and how did it work? Did it move to the new building, or is it where it was?

URBAN: That's an interesting question. Right now I think it's still in the dean's office, which was going to stay in the old building until that building is rehabbed, E52. It'll go to the fourth floor on the connector for the new building.

But I've always felt you want to be more creative and anything you can do to help make the creative atmosphere more positive. We started it as a community gallery saying that there are people in our community who are creative. Let's get their work out in front. I think at the same time there was an MIT program called Art Behind the Desk going on, so we kind of built on that idea and created a gallery and started doing art from the community or graduates related to it. It was kind of positive feedback and it started to gain a life of its own. I certainly enjoyed it every time I walked to my office seeing interesting artwork. That is still going on.

INTERVIEWER: Was there enough work to fill the gallery?

URBAN: Certainly, at the beginning we had enough to do that. Now I think there's much more reliance on the list gallery collections to help that.

INTERVIEWER: And you have a special bargain with them at this point to pay for certain upkeep or framing or something in return?

URBAN: I'm not sure what the current arrangement is. But when we built the Tang Center, we worked closely with List, and the big Venet sculpture, which was a large steel circular sculpture that was in the plaza in front of the Hermann Building, was donated by Elliot Wolk who is a Sloan grad. I notice that's now in the plaza of the new building. So, I think things are carrying on.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever get to show your work in the gallery?

URBAN: One of the shows in the dean's gallery was some of my sculpture. Most of my stuff's outside, the large scale, so it's a little harder to show in an inner space. But we did move in some of the wall hangings and smaller sculptures.

INTERVIEWER: What do people do? Do you get any reaction, or did you get any reaction?

URBAN: I did that little bit with trepidation, because I try to keep my sculpture kind of private. So I think a lot of Sloan people were surprised that I was doing that. Of course, I've been doing it for 25 or 30 years, so it's kind of a selection that wasn't new to me. But I would hope other people maybe thought of things a little differently because of that. I certainly found in also my academic career that creating a piece of sculpture has got a real analogy to creating the research insight that kind of breaks through it.

I remember taking classes at the DeCordova museum, when you have a model in the center and you have all the people around the outside and you're doing a clay sculpture. One or two of them looked just amazing, it's great insight, and then others will be very awkward. There's something that's not analytic or quantified that happens as you try to capture these. I've always felt that research dimension has that also. You give people a set of data and go around the circle, and a lot of it's going to be pretty dull data analysis and they don't find the real insight. Other people kind of do things differently and find something.

So, I would hope that maybe some of this art triggers some breakthroughs. We tend to, at MIT, I think generally look for people who do home runs -- you know, big things rather than a lot of small ones. So I think the notion was that the more art you have around, the more likely you are to maybe trigger some of those home runs.

INTERVIEWER: In 1998 you returned to teaching and research when you stepped down as dean. How was the re-entry?

URBAN: Well, that was a propulsive step on my part. I realized that as I was dean, I could continue some of the research I had been doing, but I didn't have time to start new things. I had been dean for five years, which is off-hand I think is probably a nice time. A nice length as CEO is five years is sometimes long. Lester had been dean for six years, and we were doing more of a relay race here of hand-off, if you have a fresh dean. I think being a dean, you don't have a lot of time for yourself. You're programmed, you don't have the creative time, your energy is completely channeled.

You really probably get back from that three things. You have an impact on the School, which is very rewarding. You get a certain measure of prestige, and you get a certain measure, maybe an illusion of power. So, at some point you sit and you say, well, how important are the three things versus working with students, creating new research ideas, impacting on practice through your own work. For me, kind of prestige and power wore a little thin. I felt maybe there were other people who could also impact on the School.

So I kind of said either I'm at a point now, either I decide I want to be an administrator for the rest of my career, because either I have to get back to research or it's gone, or I'm going to go back to research. That was really the decision. I just said I'd really like to get back to the research. So the re-entry wasn't that tough in the sense it's what I really wanted to do and that's what I did do. It took a while to get the momentum back up on the projects.

INTERVIEWER: But the trust and the morphing were things that were subsequent to--

URBAN: Yeah. '98 trust starting to come in, morphing started to come in, and all this meta analysis. I started meeting some really bright students. When I was 65, I had a sabbatical, and one of the things I thought is, well, maybe this is a time to do other things at MIT. After the year of sabbatical, I really missed most, I missed the teaching, but what I really missed most was working with my research team. These bright, young students, undergraduates and masters and computer science and some of our MBAs. So, that led me to kind of stay back on the MIT track. I thought, well, as long as I'm doing exciting work and it's paying off for me, I'd stay with it.

INTERVIEWER: Did your period of dean make you think about your teaching or your research any differently from before?

URBAN: Yeah, probably I think of it more broadly and more cross-functional than I would have before, maybe more strategically. So that when I look at trust and the role of trust, you're really kind of looking at a broader issue in society and not just marketing trust.

INTERVIEWER: As you got into those topics -- you talked about artificial intelligence playing some role in the thinking. Did you reach out to people doing AI at MIT? Was that across--

URBAN: I had a colleague, my colleague John Hauser is very closely hooked into kind of the AI sorts of things. So it was more by working with him that we were able to pull it together. I had, in that morphing, I had a good knowledge of Bayesian inference process, but not so much of the Gittin's part, and John really knew the Gittin's part really well, and had ties to some of the people in CSAIL So, it was through that interaction we were able to pull that skill in.

INTERVIEWER: You now head the MIT Center for Digital Business. So what's that about and what does it do and what do you do?

URBAN: Well, that was one of the things that we started after the deanship -- Erik Brynjolfsson, who heads the IT part of Sloan, and I and John Little early on, were trying to say what's the impact of this new internet system going to be on management generally? It was clear that IT was going to be a big factor. I felt marketing was probably also going to be impacted. So, back in the '98 period, '97, '98, '99, companies were really struggling. What are we going to do with this new system? So it wasn't difficult to find interesting problems and support.

So we said let's start to put together a center of companies, and we used a little bit different research model than usual. MIT often gets a consortia of people to put money into a pot that people make research proposals and allocate some money. We took a little different mount. We said, let's match faculty to companies on dedicated projects. So that the company gets value and the faculty gets value.

So we did a pairing of research sponsors, and that turned out to be quite effective -- easy and effective in the growth period, but robust as the internet collapsed. So actually the Digital Business Center did not have a big collapse. It has continued slow growth. Because I think of this careful matching of problem to faculty and making sure it pays off for both parties.

INTERVIEWER: So, the matching process still goes on and--

URBAN: Still goes on, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: --the center's still in business.

URBAN: Center's still in business, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And you do things through it?

URBAN: I do all my projects through the center. So, there was a big project with General Motors which we did, this ad morphing project. We're doing a new project on reaching GenY with new media versus old media. We have a project with Liberty Insurance on the use of apps for building trust. We have a project with Suruga Bank, which is looking at in Japan the role of trust and advisors on financial services. So all those are projects that occur there.

The only project I have which is not directly the Center of Business is a project funded by Google and WPP where we're doing a market experiment to see whether morphing ads works. So taking, in that case, 100,000 people and inferring their style from CNET clicks, and then experimenting testing control, morph or not, with AT&T ads on CBS Interactive Network.

INTERVIEWER: Do you find that with this generation, having grown up so digitally, that students here are very excited by these projects you're doing because you're tapping into that, and they're really interested in the digital, real world connection?

URBAN: I think yeah, absolutely. I mean these are really fundamental, state-of-the-art issues. Now it's Facebook and community. So the GM project is looking at building an app that will help people design a car with a web-based app, with a Facebook companion page where they design a new car, they post it to their friends, people approval vote or not on it. They have a contest across all the people to get the best ones. Then there's an award of a weekend with a new Camaro or a new Hybrid Volt, electric volt car.

So those kind of things really engage students, and I have a lot of people, some of whom I can hire, and some of whom volunteer. I have a Fulbright Fellow who actually this summer is working with me who is an Emory student. But he heard about the work and he wants to do it. I usually have one or two postdocs a year who come over because they've heard about the work that's going on and they want to key into it. Of course, that is good for me too, because I learn a lot more about Facebook from these people who are really up on Facebook.

INTERVIEWER: I wondered how tech savvy you were and how you got that way.

URBAN: I'm not tech savvy, but I'm not -- for example, on Facebook, I'm much more private, so I'm not out there tweeting my daily schedule. I talked to Karen today and here's where I'm going right now down the hall.

INTERVIEWER: Do any of your colleagues?

URBAN: Like Rene, who's the new faculty, does a lot more of that. But I find even among the students, the growing concern about how much you reveal, and some people are collecting friends, so they want thousands of friends. But increasingly, I see people wanting close networks of friends.

INTERVIEWER: Well, they can't have more than 5,000.

URBAN: That's a lot, too. But kind of having 20 or 30 closer friends. So they're very concerned about privacies and protections and so forth. So, we're trying to understand with this design app, how network embeddedness affects people's perception and use of these systems, how much information affects it, and kind of the interface cognitive elements of it affect it. So, we're doing a big kind of test and control clinical sample study with that, which is great fun.

INTERVIEWER: That sounds like-- earlier this year in discussing the turnover in dean's offices at business schools, *Bloomberg Business Week* had an article that said this was a difficult time for management education because the financial crisis had closed many people to "question the value of a graduate business degree, and with some going so far as to place the blame for the crisis squarely on the shoulders of business schools because they were responsible for training some of the individuals in the meltdown." Do you think the business schools, including Sloan, deserve any of that blame?

URBAN: Well, it's an interesting question. I suspect it indicates we have some gaps in our programs. Some of these have been recognized for a long time and proved very elusive -- one is ethics. That's been talked about -- I remember Lester Thurow had a big initiative around ethics. His kind of proposition was that--

INTERVIEWER: Which would have been late '80s, early '90s.

URBAN: Yeah, just before I became dean, when I was deputy dean with him. His kind of view was well, people are pretty well ethically formed by the time they come to Sloan, and therefore, we can't affect it very much. On the other hand, there's the view that you should be able to give people ethical dilemmas and they should be able to learn from them and refine their skills. Certainly some of the ethics of how you run the financial structures really are--

On the other hand, we teach people technologies of derivatives. Was that a mistake? Should we not have taught derivatives because they proved to be too risky? That probably needs a little more thought. I think probably we didn't make a mistake, but maybe we didn't go far enough to have people understand the implications of those systems and have economics people linked to finance enough to know what kind of regulatory structures you would need to protect against that.

So I think it definitely raises some doubts. Clearly, empirically, people believe in the MBA -- their enrollments are up at every business school, and applications are up, and tuitions are way up. It really takes a big investment to do an MBA today, given the tuitions and the costs and the age you're at with your families potentially coming back for it. So, I think people -- the market's saying this is worthwhile, but I do think we have to look at this last experience and see whether we need to change things.

We find at Sloan now a lot more interest in sustainability. It reminds me a lot of the kind of feeling in the early '70s when we were in more public management. I would say there are a good 20 percent of the students, 25 percent of students who are really concerned about issues of sustainability and the environment and role of corporations in it. I teach in my new products class a course project on the design of hydrogen vehicles, and people do an intensive design of what kind of vehicle they want to build, and who the target market is, and what features they put in and pricing and marketing.

In fact, we get a really enthusiastic, hardworking set of people who kind of say, this is the kind of thing I want to do. I want to be in business, but I want to be doing products that are socially rewarding, I want them to be green. But I realize there's a market out there and I have to sell, and I have to make money at this and I have to return to my stockholders. So, those are the kind of issues that we have to increasingly grapple with as we go forward.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned earlier that you had worked with some non-profit organizations and government on issues like family planning, and issues that probably somebody running a business wouldn't be dealing with. How did you get into those, and have you done much more along those lines over the years, or were those just a couple projects that you happened to the fall into and they were kind of different from everything else you did?

URBAN: Well, I think for about 10 years, that was the big chunk of my work. As I started out as a young faculty member here, the Ford Foundation had a program with the Sloan School, and the Sloan School had founded the Engine Institute of Management, Calcutta, with Ford Foundation money. As I was young professor they said, well, do you want to go to India to visit? I thought that's a great idea -- a long way from Central Wisconsin to get there. So, we went to India for three months on a short-term visit, and I was teaching in Calcutta. You don't have to go to Calcutta very long to be convinced the family planning is important.

So, I came back, working with students in a public marketing course -- and, as I mentioned, Ron O'Connor and Joel Lamstein -- and we started working on a project, a sponsored research project, in Atlanta with the Atlanta Area Family Planning Council on how to allocate resources to more effectively communicate family planning efforts, and run more successful programs. That project really was the spin-off that started Management Science for Health where Ron and Joel worked. They picked up some contracts from CDC to work in Atlanta and other US places, and then also USAID contracts to work in India and Afghanistan and the Philippines.

My role was kind of the mid-wife in helping getting that started and working on some of the initial projects in the Philippines and Afghanistan. Then I had to get tenure, and it was clear, a lot of international travel and onsite work isn't going to be compatible with that. So, I tended to kind of hand that off to them, and they've gone on and really built successful organizations doing -- they're the major two lead partners in the antiretroviral AIDS program in Africa today.

So I'm very happy with them. I think as I went into tenure, I probably found the more publishable work was in one of the private sector was much harder to get breakthroughs and computers and modeling in the public sector.

INTERVIEWER: Harder because there isn't the money?

URBAN: Yeah, the organizations didn't have the money, they didn't have the technical base, they didn't have the data, they weren't able to kind of support something like the Digital Business Center. The people could, like USAID were more interested in program delivery, I think appropriately, than that.

So as I kind of come toward the end of my career, actually -- I had lunch with Joel Lansing just a couple weeks ago, talking about roles I could play and maybe re-entering that organization as I phase out of my MIT work over the next years to get more back. So I think maybe the wheel has turned, and I maybe back more there. Certainly, green issues like the hydrogen car and so forth, electric vehicles--

INTERVIEWER: Well, the hydrogen car and the electric vehicle are interesting because they certainly are green social responsibility issues, and yet they're connected with business.

URBAN: Yeah, so they were natural -- that information acceleration project was really the electric vehicle that was very attractive. GM had the money to put into it. So those came there. But I think probably the health and family planning issues, education--

INTERVIEWER: So it's not that the tools didn't apply or that the work wasn't interesting, it was really more a question of was there funding to support the kinds of research you needed to do and were interested in doing.

URBAN: Yeah, and I think probably the implementation of things we now know would pay off first in those fields -- Joel's organization which has spun-off of Management Sciences for Health called John Snow, ran a project in Egypt on what was called Summer Diarrhea, it was actually cholera, a euphemism was Summer Diarrhea. The prevailing practice in Egypt at the time was to use antibiotics. For doctors, the incentive systems worked, they got paid and so forth. Actually, medically, the best thing were rehydration programs and treating cholera not with a high dose of antibiotics.

John Snow developed a major community involvement communication program using all these marketing ideas, and then were subsequently recognized for the government, the Health Minister in Egypt for saving 300,000 lives with their program. So, I think there's a lot of application with their -- probably that's not as difficult a technical problem as designing a hydrogen fuel vehicle for a corporation. So I think there will be some diffusion of these things. If I worked back with John Snow, it would probably be less in the research side, and more on a social implementation side.

INTERVIEWER: Trust marketing projects you've been doing, do you think about the issue of whether the company itself is trustworthy, as opposed to whether it can be portrayed as such?

URBAN: Well, if you're not trustworthy, it's pretty hard to portray trust for very long, because there aren't many secrets anymore with the internet and community groups. You don't get away with much. You can't hide things. There's just so much information, so much communication. So you'd really truly have to be trusting. You have to be transparent. A recent example is Toyota, which was a very trusted company, really had a trust-buster in the way they handled the acceleration problems, and less than transparent way. They're going to have to work very hard to earn that trust back.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that was certainly a big visible company and a big visible problem. I wonder if there are pockets that it's more like the, say, the stock market where if you look around you can find the opportunities, it's just a question of who's sophisticated enough to look. Everybody knows where the Dow is, but not everybody has the time or the ability to follow some small company and--

URBAN: Who might not be trusted.

INTERVIEWER: --[INAUDIBLE] development or--

URBAN: I'm sure there are certainly people who, for periods of time, don't deserve our trust. Another example--

INTERVIEWER: It's interesting to see the companies following the tweets and trying to crack down immediately when somebody starts saying something bad about them.

URBAN: Some of them hire people to populate these community groups to say things.

INTERVIEWER: That too.

URBAN: Some of these communities are pretty clever on diagnosing who's behaving in a way that doesn't seem natural.

INTERVIEWER: It seems like a dynamic field, certainly, for marketing. There's been the developments on the blogging, and the revelation that some bloggers were being paid to promote products and weren't disclosing it. Then I guess the governments--

URBAN: A lot of the buzz organizations--

INTERVIEWER: --have got involved with that to set rules.

URBAN: --that do that. I think that's typical of the kind of challenges we're going to face. People will take actions when they trust someone. A good person -- you could look at eBay, for example, why are they trusted? Well, they've got so many ratings from other people.

My best example on eBay is used cars. Something like $10 billion worth of used cars sold on eBay. Most of the used cars are not sold by individuals, they're sold by auto dealerships. These are the people we didn't trust at all before. They were the sleazy used car lots who are misrepresenting things. But what eBay enforced on them is that they had to be trustworthy, because if they screwed up with somebody, those people told other people. Who's going to go to a site if 20 percent of the people say this isn't a good site, or 10 percent or even 1 percent.

INTERVIEWER: So if you're going to buy a used car, the first thing you should do is look at eBay for who are the trustworthy dealers.

URBAN: I think the whole used car industry's been revolutionized that you don't see many people who aren't trustworthy anymore because they are selling cars. People are out there -- in fact, the used car dealers, if they get a complaint pursue it so aggressively, because they don't want 1 percent of the people saying bad things about them. So, it's a good example where transparency and trust and ratings really has changed the world.

At the same time, I think, as you say, there are still scams. There are fishing going on, there's lots of terrible things that are happening out there that have to be done. That's one of the challenges of how do you build trust, how do you maintain trust. I think transparency is one of the key roles, and we hope that with all the interaction on that, community groups that will ferret out most of the untrustworthy people.

INTERVIEWER: You wrote an autobiographical essay for the *Journal of Marketing* in 2002 that was entitled When I Stop Learning I Will Leave. You're still here. Does that mean you're still learning and that it's fun? It sounds like you still love the research ideas.

URBAN: I hope I portrayed that I'm still learning.

INTERVIEWER: It doesn't sound like it's every going to stop. You still wake up with ideas and it's exciting. URBAN: It's exciting. I mean some of it's inductive. Working with students on these new media is really particularly interesting as we trace through kind of how they're using it. With a historical perspective of seeing how customer interactions have evolved over time. I can bring a little bit of that perspective to it. But yeah, I think the old story was MIT's a good place to be from, you may not make it here. The answer was, well, you may not want to keep me, but I'll tell you, I'll leave as soon as I'm not learning, because I'll go somewhere else. So, they haven't asked me to leave and I'm still here. So I guess that--

INTERVIEWER: And having ideas.

URBAN: To having ideas, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do the students come in with lots of ideas on the digital stuff just because they're so immersed in it and they want to know more?

URBAN: Yeah, you see a lot of entrepreneurial ideas. I'm kind of associated with the Entrepreneurship Center. I think today I've got two visits later in the afternoon of students with ideas for new companies. So they want to come in and talk about how they think this might work, what there is to do, or how does it plug into the system.

INTERVIEWER: And this isn't saying if we have the idea, how can we test it to see if it's going to sell.

URBAN: Well, it's part of that, because to make sure it's a successful idea, but it's more generally how do I cope with this environment. They talked to somebody and said, well, you should talk to Glen because he knows something about marketing these things, so we then have a discussion about it.

INTERVIEWER: But you sound like you like to study it more than to do that entrepreneur thing, so it's interesting that you--

URBAN: Well, I've done the entrepreneur thing four or five times with companies.

INTERVIEWER: But it's where you get the most fun, it sounds.

URBAN: No. I think it's the research and creating the new tools and the new ideas that's the most fun.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that you've had an easier time or a better time doing this at MIT than you might have elsewhere because of the interaction?

URBAN: Well, I haven't been elsewhere, so I can't say whether it would be better. But I know it's been good here. MIT fit my style very well, and the colleagueship and openness and innovation have been great for me.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think MIT has changed much in your time here?

URBAN: I think MIT's changed a lot, but the core values are still there -- innovation, entrepreneurship, Ameritocracy, hard work, kind of caring for other people. Those are values that are still here and strong. But obviously, we have lots of new buildings, we have lots of new programs, we have lots of new faculty, and so that's a vibrant innovation.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I hope you continue to have fun. Thank you very much.

URBAN: Good, thank you.

INTERVIEWER: I've enjoyed the conversation.

URBAN: I've enjoyed archiving.