# http://www.umsl.edu/divisions/business/files/images/logo_rtcallblock.jpeg Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing is the idea that companies can outsource to crowds of people outside the firm to perform tasks ranging from the simple to the complex. Google’s use of [reCAPTCHA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ReCAPTCHA), is an example of using crowds for simple tasks like translating books, one word at a time. There are other examples of firms using crowdsourcing to help solve complex problems, like Gold Corp’s contest to help determine best opportunities to mine for gold based on very sophisticated seismic studies.

***The task for your group is to help general managers understand the promises, pitfalls, and best practices associated with crowdsourcing.***

Your presentation may begin by answering these questions:

* What is crowdsourcing?
* How big is the phenomenon today and how big is projected to be?
* Which types of tasks are most frequently crowdsourced?
* Who are some of the major clients in this space? (Client firms who use crowdsourcing to get work done)
* Who are the major providers/intermediaries that help to facilitate crowdsourcing?

Your group might proceed with a brief history of crowdsourcing. If you look at the history of crowdsourcing, we have examples that are hundreds of years old. For example, in 1714 the British Government needed a solution to “The Longitude Problem” which made sailing difficult and dangerous, killing thousands of seamen every year. The British government offered 20,000 pounds (worth $4.7M in 2010) for people to invent the solution. What is different today is that the internet makes it possible to coordinate work from millions, even billions, of people. Prior to the internet, the maximum number of people that could be coordinated was about 100,000, (like building the Egyptian pyramids).

The term Crowdsourcing is generally credited to Jeff Howe, who is considered one of the original thinkers on crowdsourcing. Read his books! You might show the class some you-tube videos. Another person I admire in this space is Luis von Ahn, the inventor of CAPTCHA and reCAPTCHA. His work on getting crowds to tag images for the internet is also another interesting example you might consider covering in your presentation. You might consider even playing his ESP game in class. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ESP_Game>

Your presentation should proceed with one to three case studies of organizations' with crowdsourcing. Most likely most of these will be secondary cases, but hopefully you can research one or more examples yourselves in terms of doing interviews. Case studies should include the Company Background:

* Size of company in terms of sales and profits & number of employees
* Major products the company sells
* Tell us the crowdsourcing story—the intentions, implementation, outcomes, and lessons learned.

The main part of the case should be a retelling of the crowdsourcing story at each company.

The group should end the presentation by comparing the cases and providing some best practices or important lessons for general managers. Your group should also cover crowdsourcing trends.

If you have other creative ideas, please feel free to discuss them with me.