

# iGROUPS

## Project Plan IPRO 497-353

*Web-based Groupware for Team Collaboration*



## **1.0 Objectives**

The objective for IPRO 353 is to evaluate the business opportunities for commercializing iGroups. We will do this by conducting research pertaining to primary competitors, the industry as a whole, consumers' wants and needs, legal issues that could affect iGroups; conducting competitive analysis; developing a website to help market iGroups; and drafting a business plan and final report, which will include feasibility analysis and recommended future steps. Included in the business plan/final report will be:

- description of iGroups
- market and industry data
- competitive analysis
- list and description of applicable legal topics
- financial data
- website description/information
- projections for income, sales, and cash flow
- analysis of different business models/selected business model
- final recommendations including suggested next steps

## **2.0 Background**

iGroups is a web-based software developed by the IPRO office for use for IPRO teams. The genesis of iGroups was in Spring 2005 with the creation of a software tool called iKnow. iKnow was created so that IPROs that spanned more than a semester would have means of information transfer, to reduce information loss, time waste for retrieving IPRO data. iGroups followed to complement iKnow by providing a comprehensive system to use during the semester, to assist in group collaboration, store files for easy access by the IPRO team members, archive group emails, and organize the IPRO's time in order to make the project more organized and hence more productive. iGroups is written primarily in PHP, and is currently a closed-source project whose rights are owned by the IPRO department at IIT. iGroups has been almost entirely an IPRO department piece of software. However, in Fall 2007, the IPRO office let Auburn University use iGroups for some of its team-based projects. Michigan Technological University followed in this pilot program for Spring 2008. The feedback from Auburn has been encouraging, and it has been suggested that iGroups has commercial potential outside IIT.

IPRO 353 was created to evaluate this potential, and create a preliminary business plan which could be used by the IPRO office in determining procedures to commercialize iGroups. iGroups however, is not a perfect piece of software. While IPRO 353 is not necessarily involved with the actual modification of the software, the group recognizes that iGroups does need modification before its success in market. IPRO 353 has provided suggestions to the iGroup software modification team for improvements in the past. Part of the business plan will be recommendations for the business model iGroups should follow, which may or may not involve the university attempting to sell it. Creating a startup business is a possibility, as is the relicensing of iGroups as open source software. Ethically, there are many pitfalls we could fall into. Among these is the temptation to exaggerate numbers in order to inflate iGroups's potential as a business. As we would be seeking investors for iGroups, inflated numbers could mean investment received under false pretenses. IPRO currently has invested an estimated \$100,000. At the present moment, iGroups is not a perfect piece of software, more investment in its development and many modifications will certainly be necessary. The business plan will evaluate what the IPRO office could expect on its future investment, and if that return will be enough to turn a net profit. If there is a net profit, the final report of IPRO 353 shall outline a recommended course of action in order to maximize the profit. The final report will include the recommendation and the necessary course of implementation the IPRO office could follow.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.0 Methodology

The group has divided into five sub-groups for the first half of the semester. These sub-groups are primary market research, website/marketing, naming, intellectual property research, and competitive analysis. The sub-groups are broken down below:

Primary Market Research
Sweta Gurnani*
Christopher Chachakis
Dev Narasimhan

Website
James Schweiger*
Alejandro Taboada
Michael Greiling

Naming
Alejandro Taboada
Michael Greiling

<sup>1</sup> Bennett, Casey. Project Plan -Spring 2008. IPRO 353. 22 February, 2008.

Intellectual Property
Dev Narasimhan*
Christopher Lam
Sweta Gurnani

Competitive Analysis
John-Paul Roman*
William Ward
Mark Cooney

\* denotes sub-group leader

Primary Market Research: conduct surveys to determine the needs and wants of consumers in our target markets and evaluate the standing of iGroups versus its primary competitors, namely Blackboard, Yahoo! Groups, Google Docs, etc.

Website/Marketing: design and build a website to be used for marketing the commercial iGroups and educating consumers and potential buyers about the product

Naming: determine and potentially trademark a name for the commercial iGroups and investigate potential logos and other aspects of branding to assist in marketing and creating consumer interest

Intellectual Property Research: research various legal topics that may affect commercial iGroups such as patents, privacy, trademarks, copyrights, and liability

Competitive Analysis: conduct industry analysis and coordinate with the Primary Market Research team to determine primary competitors, along with what functions are desired by consumers in our target markets, particularly ones not currently offered in order to conduct competitive analysis, including SWOT analysis, Porter's Five Forces, and the Value Chain model

For the second half of the semester, we will assess our progress and determine what future tasks are needed. We will then determine new sub-groups to complete the remaining required tasks. Potential groups include a business plan sub-group, business model sub-group, and a financial sub-group.

Individual tasks will be assigned to subsets of the sub-groups. This will ensure every team member does an equitable amount of work and that there are enough distinct tasks to take advantage of everyone's separate experience and backgrounds.

The IPRO deliverables will be collaborative with each group member contributing throughout the semester. There will however be a point person to coordinate the group's efforts with the deliverables, finalize and format them, and ensure everything is completed on time.

#### 4.0 Expected Results

Through our research, we expect to determine our primary competitors, what consumers in our target markets want and need, which needs are not currently being met by iGroups, what needs are not being met by anyone in the market, what legal issues need to be addressed or planned for, and how we compare to the industry as a whole and to our primary competitors. We also expect to have a name selected for the product, along with a marketing website available, and a business model selected, including financial estimates/projections.

#### 5.0

Item	Amount Requested
Copies of surveys (200)	\$45
Candy incentives for student responses	\$15
Focus Group Refreshments	\$100
Focus Group Incentives - \$10 Gift Cards	\$120

#### 6.0 Schedule of Tasks and Milestone Events

##### A. Work breakdown schedule

NAME	START	FINISH
<b>IPRO Deliverables</b>	<b>8/25</b>	<b>12/1</b>
• Project Plan	8/25	9/17
• Midterm Presentation	9/28	10/5
• Midterm Peer Review	10/8	10/8
• Abstracts, Poster, and Presentation	11/8	11/22

• Code of Ethics	9/17	10/1
• Minutes	8/25	12/1
• Website	9/3	12/1
• Final Reports	11/21	12/1
• IPRO Deliverables CD	11/30	12/1

<b>Marketing Website</b>	<b>9/3/08</b>	<b>10/1/08</b>
• Website Design and Content	9/3	10/1
• Implement Website	9/20	10/1
• Implement external group adding feature	9/30	10/1

<b>Intellectual Property</b>	<b>9/15/08</b>	<b>10/1/08</b>
• Contact Professor Stoner	9/15	9/15
• Research patents of programs	9/15	9/21
• Meet with Professor Stoner	9/18	9/18
• Conduct Legal Research	9/19	10/1
• Follow-Up Meeting w/ Prof. Stoner	9/22	9/22
• Collaborate with law students	9/24	10/1

<b>Primary Market Research</b>	<b>9/10/08</b>	<b>9/30/08</b>
• Decide on Primary Market Research (PMR) mediums– research appropriate type(s) of PMR to conduct	9/10	9/12
• Assemble surveys – create reliable, valid surveys for different target market groups	9/13	9/14

• Conduct surveys	9/15	9/23
• Compile and analyze results	9/25	9/27
• Conclusions/final report	9/28	9/30
• Contact potential focus group participants	9/15	9/23
• Organize focus group	9/13	9/23
• Conduct focus group	9/24	9/24

<b>Competitive Analysis</b>	<b>9/3/08</b>	<b>10/1/08</b>
• Research competitors	9/3	10/1
• Research industry - financial ratios, ROI, related product offerings, service provided, etc.	9/3	10/1
• Competitive analysis - Porter's Five Forces, Value Chain, generic model, SWOT, etc.	9/3	10/1

<b>Naming</b>	<b>9/3/08</b>	<b>10/1/08</b>
• Decide on name – check registered domain names and trademarks	9/3	10/1

### Summary of Tasks

At present, there are a lot of web-based computer programs which help people interact each other. For example, there are e-mail clients made by well-known software development companies. The problem with e-mail clients are that they cannot share or organize computer files in one place. iGroups is an online software suite containing tools to enhance group communication and information management. It centralizes all aspects of group projects including email communications, document creation and versioning, task management and accountability. And the mission of IPRO 353 is to evaluate the business opportunity of iGroups. In order to complete this project, this IPRO team is divided into five subgroups for the first half of the semester. One of the teams would be in charge of potentially changing the name of iGroups. Another team is responsible for setting a marketing website for iGroups (separate from the iGroups program itself) to promote

awareness. A third team is in charge of completing a thorough competitive analysis on iGroups to determine potential competitive threats in the market and gain a better feel for its sustainability against such threats. A fourth team is involved with exploring and treating any legality issues that may be tied to iGroups. Yet a fifth team is taking on the task of conducting primary market research in an effort to define and better understand our target market.

When trying to start up a business, we recognize that the tasks needing completion will change as time passes. After completing one task, only then can another necessary task be completed to build upon it. In light of this, we have chosen to reevaluate our position with regard to our IPRO objective(s) after the Midterm Review in order to determine what teams still need to stay active and what new tasks, and thus, new teams need to be created. Consequently, we are not currently able to provide a detailed task-timeline of events occurring after the Midterm Review.

After the Midterm Review, we will evaluate our group findings—including the Primary Market Research—and take the necessary steps to update our competitive analysis, to decide on a business model, to map out maintenance and customer support levels, to determine method of iGroups implementation onto client servers, as well as to determine the need of iGroups enhancements and business ventures with other companies, such as IMI Technologies. We also plan on going to other schools and group organizations to pitch and/or demo iGroups. The marketing website for iGroups will continually be updated and improved.

The team results would then be evaluated and combined to produce a Business Plan. If this business plan is determined to be feasible that would mean there is a business opportunity for iGroups.

#### B. Start and End Dates for Tasks Listed

- August 25<sup>th</sup> – Project Started, Minutes started
- September 3<sup>rd</sup> – Project Plan started, Website started
- September 17<sup>th</sup> – Code of Ethics started, Project Plan completed
- September 28<sup>th</sup> – Midterm Presentation started
- October 1<sup>st</sup> – Code of Ethics completed
- October 5<sup>th</sup> – Midterm Presentation completed
- October 8<sup>th</sup> – Midterm Peer Review completed
- November 8<sup>th</sup> – Abstract, Poster, and Presentation started
- November 21<sup>st</sup> – Final Presentation Slides started
- November 22<sup>nd</sup> - Abstract, Poster, and Presentation completed
- December 1<sup>st</sup> – Minutes, Website, Final Presentation Slides completed

#### C. Breakdown of Tasks, Individuals Assigned and Hours Estimated for Tasks

Name	Individual Assigned	Estimated Hours



<b>I PRO Deliverables</b>		
• Project Plan	Sweta Gurnani, John-Paul Roman	10
• Midterm Presentation	Everyone, Leaders: Sweta Gurnani and John-Paul Roman	10
• Midterm Peer Review	everyone	1.5
• Abstracts, Poster, and Presentation	everyone, Leaders: Sweta Gurnani and John-Paul Roman	95
• Code of Ethics	Everyone, Leader: Sweta Gurnani	10
• Minutes	Christopher Chachakis	60
• Website	Leader: James Schweiger	100
• Final Reports	Bill Ward, John-Paul Roman, Alejandro Taboada, Dev Narasimham	55
• I PRO Deliverables CD	James Schweiger	2

<b>Marketing Website</b>		
• Website Design and Content	Alejandro Taboada	25
• Implement Website	Michael Greiling	25
• Implement external group adding feature	James Schweiger	25

<b>Intellectual Property</b>		
• Contact Professor Stoner	Sweta Gurnani	-----
• Research patents of programs	Sweta Gurnani, Christopher Lam, Dev	25

	Narasimhan	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with Professor Stoner</li> </ul>	Sweta Gurnani, Christopher Lam, Dev Narasimhan	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow-Up Meeting w/ Prof. Stoner</li> </ul>	Sweta Gurnani, Christopher Lam, Dev Narasimhan	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with law students</li> </ul>	Sweta Gurnani, Dev Narasimhan, Christopher Lam	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct legal research</li> </ul>	Sweta Gurnani, Dev Narasimhan, Christopher Lam	30

<b>Primary Market Research</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decide on Primary Market Research (PMR) mediums– research appropriate type(s) of PMR to conduct</li> </ul>	Sweta Gurnani, Christopher Chachakis, Dev Narasimhan	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assemble surveys – create reliable, valid surveys for different target market groups</li> </ul>	Sweta Gurnani, Christopher Chachakis, Dev Narasimhan	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct surveys</li> </ul>		
students	Sweta Gurnani, Christopher Chachakis, Dev Narasimhan	6
organizations/committees	Dev Narasimhan	6
professors	Christopher Chachakis	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compile and analyze results</li> </ul>	Sweta Gurnani, Christopher Chachakis, Dev Narasimhan	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conclusions/final report</li> </ul>	Sweta Gurnani, Christopher Chachakis,	9

	Dev Narasimhan	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact potential focus group participants</li> </ul>	Sweta Gurnani, Christopher Chachakis, Dev Narasimhan	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize focus group</li> </ul>	Sweta Gurnani	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct focus group</li> </ul>	Sweta Gurnani, Christopher Chachakis, Dev Narasimhan	2

<b>Competitive Analysis</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research competitors</li> </ul>	Mark Cooney	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research industry - financial ratios, ROI, related product offerings, service provided, etc.</li> </ul>	Bill Ward	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competitive analysis - Porter's Five Forces, Value Chain, generic model, SWOT, etc.</li> </ul>	John-Paul Roman	15

<b>Naming</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decide on name – check registered domain names and trademarks</li> </ul>	Alejandro Taboada Michael Greiling	3

D. Gantt Chart

See uploaded file.

**7.0 Individual Team Member**

Members: Alejandro Taboada

Christopher Chachakis

Dev Narasimhan

James Schweiger

John-Paul Roman

Mark Cooney

Michael Greiling

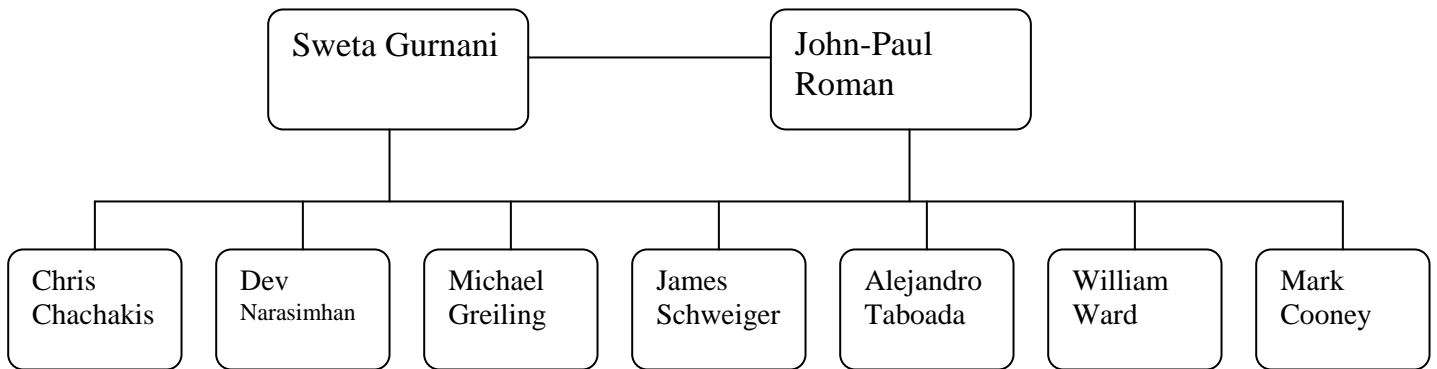
Sweta Gurnani

William Ward

Instructors: Christopher Lam

Nik Rokop

Group Hierarchy:



<b>Name</b>	<b>Year/Major</b>	<b>Strengths/Skills</b>	<b>Roles/Tasks</b>
John-Paul Roman	5 <sup>th</sup> year Business Administration - Finance	Data analysis, market research, competitive analysis	Deliverables manager, Competitive Analysis leader, competitive analysis charts

Sweta Gurnani	3 <sup>rd</sup> year Business Administration	Organization, multi-tasking, people skills, familiarity with applicable topics	Primary Market Research leader, student surveyor, focus group coordinator, Task Scheduler/Manager
Chris Chachakis	4 <sup>th</sup> year Computer Engineering	General Research, Website coding, good at forming questions	Minute Taker, student and professor surveyor
James Schweiger	4 <sup>th</sup> year Computer Science	Java, JSP	Website/Marketing leader, implementing web site feature
Mark Cooney	4 <sup>th</sup> year Information Technology	Systems administrator, Linux	Investigate possible competitors, determine primary competitors
Mike Greiling	5 <sup>th</sup> year Computer Science	PHP, Linux, Apache, MySQL, website coding	Working to rename iGroups, implementing marketing website
Dev Narasimhan	4 <sup>th</sup> year Biomedical Engineering	Familiar with patent research, strong presenter, proficient with Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Publisher	Intellectual Property leader, student and committee surveyor
Alejandro Taboada	Aerospace Engineering	Project management, public relations, sales	Working to rename iGroups and design website
Bill Ward	4 <sup>th</sup> year Business Administration –	Marketing strategies,	Conduct industry research

	Human Resources	exposure to various revenue sources	
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### 8.0 Assigned Roles

<b>Role</b>	<b>Individual</b>
Minute Taker	Christopher Chachakis
Task Scheduler/Manager	Sweta Gurnani
Deliverables Manager	John-Paul Roman
Primary Market Research leader	Sweta Gurnani
Website/Marketing leader	James Schweiger
Naming leader	Not Applicable
Intellectual Property leader	Dev Narasimhan
Competitive Analysis leader	John-Paul Roman