Hi Lori,

This is regards the above subject.

Professor Aric Rindfleisch (University of Illinois Urbana Champaign) and myself, Argha Sen, 2nd Year PhD student (University of Nebraska-Lincoln) have put together a special session.

There are three paper presentations proposed. The document with all three abstracts is attached.

**Paper I**

**Referring Competitors: Which Supplier Should a Customer Ask for a Competitor Referral?**
Authors: **Mahima Hada** (Baruch College), **Gary L. Lilien** (Smeal College of Business, Penn State) and **Arnaud D. Bruyn** (ESSEC Business School)

**Paper II**

**The Impact of User Contributions on NPD Success in a Crowdsourcing Community**
Authors: **Matthew O’Hern** (University of New Hampshire), **Billur Akdeniz** (University of New Hampshire) and **Shuili Du** (University of New Hampshire)

**Paper III**

**Effect of improvisation on performance outcomes for firms in B2B alliances**
Authors: **Argha Sen** (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), **Aric Rindfleisch** (University of Illinois Urbana Champaign) and **Alok Kumar** (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

I look forward to hearing back on this.

With Warm Regards

Argha Sen
EMERGENT TOPICS IN INTER-FIRM (B2B) RELATIONSHIPS RESEARCH

Session Chair:

Aric Rindfleisch (University of Illinois Urbana Champaign)

Argha Sen (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

A dominant theme in interfirm (B2B hereafter) relationships research within marketing is how firms can efficiently manage their supply chain relationships. Several extant B2B theories implicitly view a focal firm to be 'compartmentalized' from that of its supply chain partners through sharply demarcated firm boundaries. However, increasingly, firms are getting interested in building and maintaining ‘close’ relationships with their partners. This is being made possible through a variety of organizational practices such as incorporating feedback from extant customers in product development and leveraging customer referrals to initiate new B2B relationships. However, extant B2B research has hardly scratched the surface of such practices. This special session looks at the role of different organizational practices, such as customer referrals and crowd-sourcing, which can be harnessed to make extant B2B relationships more efficient.

Three presentations are planned in this session: The first paper by Hada, Lilien and Bruyn, deals with referrals in B2B relationships. The authors ask which supplier should a customer rely on for referral information concerning another (new) supplier, especially when the referred and referring supplier are likely to also be potential competitors. Thus, information-seeking behavior and trust within B2B relationships in a competitive scenario is the highlight of the paper. Several experiments suggest support for the authors' hypotheses. In the next presentation, O’Hern, Akdeniz and Du discuss the factors that contribute towards enhanced NPD outcomes for a firm, in a crowd-sourcing environment. The authors delve deep into the nature of crowd-sourced user-generated content, and offer a novel theoretical scheme to classify crowd-sourcing contributions. Empirical validation of this scheme suggests that various forms of user-contribution help increase NPD success in a synergistic fashion. Conceptually, these two papers highlight how firms depend on both indirect (i.e., referral) and direct (i.e., crowd-sourced) forms of inputs for optimizing on their
business goals. In the last presentation, Sen, Rindfleisch and Kumar examine the phenomenon of improvisation in business to business alliances. Notably, even with improvisation, inputs from alliance members (and customers) are still available in theory, as in the case for referrals and crowd-sourcing; but the focal firm lacks the time to capitalize on these inputs in practice. This paper proposes the presence of improvisation in certain types of alliances and identifies the specific conditions that either enhance or reduce the impact of alliance-level improvisation on the focal firm's performance outcomes from the alliance.

Cumulatively, these three papers offer a deeper understanding of organizational practices such as referrals and crowd-sourcing and their influence on a firm’s existing set of B2B relationships. We hope that our session will spur theoretical discussions of other organizational and inter-organizational practices, beyond crowd-sourcing and referrals, which firms can deploy to achieve efficiency and effectiveness gains. This becomes especially pertinent with the traditional form of vertically integrated firms giving way to a more loosely-held alliances and open networks of firms. Finally, we hope that our session will also contribute to relevant inputs for improved managerial decision making.
ABSTRACT

Consider the marketing analytics solutions’ market, which has more than 1000 suppliers offering a wide range of solutions. In such complex B2B markets, suppliers have better information about the quality of other suppliers, often their competitors, than their customers do. Therefore, customers are likely to ask their current suppliers for a recommendation for another supplier for a related solution. However, not all suppliers will recommend the best supplier for the customer, as that supplier could potentially be a competitor. So which supplier should the customer ask for a referral – their “trusted advisor” or another supplier they work with, but who is simply an “order-taker”? In Study 1, with a sample of managers, we assess which supplier (i.e., in terms of customer-supplier relationship) does a customer ask for a referral. As intuition suggests, we find that customers almost always ask their “trusted-advisor” suppliers for a referral rather than other suppliers with whom they have a more distant relationship. However, in Study 2, with an agent-based simulation, we show that the trusted-advisor suppliers have the most to lose by bringing a potential competitor in, and are therefore not likely to give the best referral. In Study 3, with a sample of managers, we show that the findings of our agent-based model hold in practice; that is, that managers in general ask their “trusted-advisors” for referrals for other suppliers while they would be better off if they ask their other suppliers instead.
The Impact of User Contributions on NPD Success in a Crowdsourcing Community

Matthew O'Hern (University of New Hampshire)
Billur Akdeniz (University of New Hampshire)
Shuili Du (University of New Hampshire)

Presenter: Matthew O'Hern (University of New Hampshire)

ABSTRACT
Increasingly, firms are employing crowdsourcing platforms to harness user knowledge and spur innovation. Although existing literature suggests that crowdsourcing initiatives can provide value to firms by reducing their development costs and providing them with novel ideas (Cook 2008; Ogawa and Piller 2006), relatively little is known about the factors that enhance new product development (NPD) success within a crowdsourcing community.

To explore this issue, this paper examines several types of user-generated content and offers a new, fine-grained approach to categorize crowdsourcing contributions. Specifically, we differentiate between core contributions (e.g., submitting new product designs) without which, a crowdsourcing platform cannot function and non-core contributions (e.g., commenting on other users’ designs), which are also very prevalent but are not absolutely essential from an NPD perspective. Using online data extracted from a crowdsourcing community that tracks the activity of over ten thousand individual contributors, we explore the degree to which each contribution type affects NPD success, the degree to which each contribution type is influenced by the other type, and the possible synergistic effects that emerge when contributors make both types of contributions. Hence, this research contributes new knowledge by shedding light on the emerging phenomenon of crowdsourcing and investigating the roles that various types of user contributions play in generating value for the firm within a crowdsourcing community.
Effect of improvisation on performance outcomes for firms in B2B alliances

Argha Sen (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)
Aric Rindfleisch (University of Illinois Urbana Champaign)
Alok Kumar (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

Presenter: Argha Sen (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

ABSTRACT

Traditional perspectives view marketing strategy formulation to be composed of two distinct functional stages: composition stage of the strategic plan and implementation stage of the plan, with the former occurring before the latter. The phenomenon of improvisation which has hardly been studied in marketing, is defined as one in which these two stages occur simultaneously, without any necessary temporal order. Some research studies, conducted largely at the organizational level, have posited certain antecedent conditions, such as environmental turbulence, which trigger the need for improvisation. We believe that environments surrounding strategic alliances can also provide fertile grounds for improvisational actions. The aim of this paper is to explore the effect of such improvisational actions in new product (process) development alliances on the performance outcomes of participating firms. We identify boundary conditions that support or hinder the effect of improvisation on performance outcomes for these firms. These conditions are categorized into environment-, firm-, and alliance-level factors. We hope that our research will pave the way for future studies of improvisation in alliance contexts.