Introduction to the Minitrack:
Computer-Mediated Inter-Organizational Systems

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Inter-organizational systems (IOS) have the potential to affect all aspects of market and trade relationships, including search, negotiation, procurement, invoicing, and payment. Electronic links improve efficiency and effectiveness in markets and other inter-organizational transactions by (1) decoupling the flow of products from the flow of information and market processes, (2) reducing transaction costs by replacing costly physical markets with electronic marketplaces, or (3) improving the ability to audit and monitor transactions, allowing the organization to increase delegation of responsibility without losing control. The full potential of these systems to transform market and customer-supplier relationships is just beginning to be realized, even though these systems have been used in some industries for decades (e.g. airlines).

A total of eight papers will be presented in the three sessions for this minitrack. The first session focuses on strategic opportunities from IOS implementation. Clark and Stoddard describe direct and indirect performance benefits resulting from IOS innovations, with dramatic improvements in channel performance resulting from using IOS as an enabler for Interorganizational Business Process Reengineering. Chatfield presents a case study of the Japanese automobile industry to demonstrate the strategic benefits that can be realized from EDI implementation. Poon and Swatman present a framework for examining the potential strategic benefits of Internet-enabled alliances between small businesses. All three papers present a view of IOS as an important strategic opportunity for large and small businesses, with the potential for restructuring industries and creating new global alliances.

The second session of this minitrack addresses issues related to the adoption and diffusion of EDI. Cathomen and Williams describe the differences between FEDI diffusion in the United Kingdom and Switzerland. Finnegan and Golden examine issues and key decision factors for late adopters of EDI from a non-technical perspective for multiple companies in Ireland. Parker and Swatman present a proposal for research in progress regarding an innovative approach for overcoming EDI adoption barriers through using TREAT, a multinational cooperative

executive education program. They are interested in working with other academics on this interactive global executive education effort to demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed approach for overcoming EDI adoption barriers.

The third and final session of the minitrack addresses issues related to the development of electronic markets. Lee examines alternative forms of electronic brokerage and auction markets and the potential impact of these electronic markets on industry and market structures. His paper addresses both economic incentives and social barriers behind introducing different forms of electronic marketplaces. Heck and Ribbers describe the impact of electronic markets using four case studies of firms in the Dutch flower and transportation industries. In this final session, the presentations during the three sessions will be briefly summarized and an open discussion will be led by the minitrack coordinators regarding areas of research that are currently being pursued related to this topic area, or which the minitrack coordinators feel would be useful to encourage for presentation at the minitrack next year.

For our minitrack next year, we would like to encourage authors to submit papers that examine IOS implementation challenges, barriers, and adoption facilitators. Implementation of IOS do not always provide economic or strategic benefits for the adopting firms. Although many examples of successes exist, we need to improve our understanding of the reasons for success or failure in IOS innovations. We invite papers for this minitrack that address the organizational and technological factors related to IOS implementation and diffusion, including: (1) technological, organizational, or market structure explanations for success and/or failure of IOS; (2) the role of business process redesign (BPR) in facilitating IOS or creating value through IOS; (3) case studies of companies or markets that demonstrate mutual economic benefits from the innovation; (4) the potential for IOS to transform and create new markets (e.g. virtual or hyperspace markets); and (5) the role of the information superhighway and Internet in facilitating development of IOS capabilities.