Crowdsourcing Impossible Search Tasks
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Here is a photo. Can you find this person in London today? ...and do the same in New York, DC, Bratislava, and Stockholm

The Tag Challenge
“Determine whether and how social media can be used to accomplish a realistic, time-sensitive, international law enforcement goal.”

Lessons Learnt
• This can be done!
  • Our team, CrowdScanner, found 3 targets and won the challenge

• reaching people with affinity for the task
  • 2 out of 3 targets found by people interested in crowdsourcing

• social networks (Facebook and Twitter) are not enough. Need publicity through more traditional online media
  • Slashdot posts, CNET, ZDNet, university press releases

• fair incentive scheme
  • all prize money goes to the crowd
  • incentives to recruit others as well as to search

• credibility
  • users believed us because of university affiliations and good track record in crowdsourcing

Broader Context and Open Questions
2 years earlier: The Red Balloon Challenge
• 10 balloons discovered within 9 hours

• verification of information
  • how to filter our false reports?

• sustainability
  • how to generate interest for similar projects?

• role of competition
  • how does presence of competing teams affect completion of the task?