**Goal of this part of the proposal**:

Investigate at least 5 competitors in our market and report what they do well and what we will do better. Determine features that these competitors have that are appealing or similar to the idea we have planned for our product. Determine features that they have that we don’t like or don’t fit the goal of our product.

**How this competitor investigation was approached:**

When looking at other competitors within our market, I narrowed them down to individual time management tools. This means tools such as Flow, Trello, Producteev or Bitrix24 are not included in this investigation of competitors. The features of these products does not narrowly match the features and aim of our product as they are based around collaboration and team productivity, not individual.

As I researched a few competitor products I decided that there was potential for competition in two different platforms. Not all of the competition support multi-platform functionality, such as a website/web app and a mobile app. All of the competitors I researched had functionality based around a website or web app, as that is the main goal of our own product. We are going to feature a simple to use Android app and some of these competitors have mobile apps across various platforms, making them more interesting to look at for good and bad features/functionality.

There are a ton of task management tools out there, so I took some of the more popular ones and also ones that are not so well known. A few I have never heard off. I also tried to have a few that were rich with features and ones that were very simple with only a few features. That way we have a broader spectrum of the competition, not just the big name feature full tools or the simple to-do lists.

When determining good features versus bad ones for each competitor I compared them with the goal of our own product. For example, our product is not based around the ability to have collaboration and sharing with teams, so that would be a bad feature that we would not include or incur any costs to put in our build. One the other hand, something like and Auto-Scheduler or timer would be a good feature, as these are things are part of the goal we looking to achieve with our product.

**In House Note:**

The most well implemented or most interesting competitors include Nirvana, Smartycast and Toodledo. These three are the best build for a tool that is close to what our product is trying to achieve. Each has something that makes it work well, or features that separate themselves from the other products. Individual research of these three products could help spark ideas for our own product and are good to see what is good to do and what not to do. The other products have their good qualities but are rather standard or bland. Looking at any of these is a good way to see examples of things we should avoid or improve for our product to be better than the competition.

**Online Task Management Tools (aka The Competition)**:

* [**Google Tasks**](http://mail.google.com/mail/help/tasks/):
  + Good:
    - Access tasks in Gmail accounts, Google Calendar, iGoogle, mobile browsers
    - Group tasks into lists, make notes, set due-dates
    - “Add to tasks” function/button turns emails into to-do items
    - View lists on same page as emails
    - Access task lists from phones, check off as you complete, print lists (ex. Grocery lists)
    - Stays updated no matter how it is accessed (mobile, email, calendar, …)
    - Price: Free for Gmail users
  + Bad:
    - Effort required for user to set/update tasks
    - Requires full use/membership to Google Account
    - Based mostly around lists, limited in other features
  + Conclusion:
    - This tool has great integration across email, calendar and mobile, allowing updates to propagate from one to the other automatically. It has good list features and is easy to port data to each platform. A little heavy on user involvement as it takes time to set each task and add notes to even small things like a grocery list.
* [**Nirvana**](https://nirvanahq.com/):
  + Good:
    - Organize tasks by projects and contexts
    - Access from web browser and mobile devices
    - Assign tasks to contacts and follow-up emails
    - Set up email ticklers to remind you of what you need to do
    - Good for focus solely on own productivity
    - Cloud based, secure
    - Price: Beta version is free
    - GTD concepts: contexts, energy, time, next, someday, waiting for, scheduled activity all built in
    - Easy start/un-star for focus, also auto-starring tasks for you, based on due dates and start dates
    - Contexts isolate to-dos based on available time, energy, location, resource, dates, etc. in real time
    - Assign contacts to projects and to-dos
    - Projects built from any to-do, dynamically build next list alongside all active projects next lists
    - Logbook keeps track of completion
    - Export to-dos, projects in Excel, XML, JSON anytime, as many times
  + Bad:
    - Still in beta
    - No mobile app available
    - Very heavy in features
    - Not very good for simple lists of tasks
  + Conclusion:
    - This is a great tool, with a very similar market goal as our own product. It have very strong features like auto-starring (focusing) important tasks, contexts for what can be achieved at any time given time, energy or other factors. Next-lists are also very interesting way to have a user manager their time with little planning on their time. User involvement is high as they have to enter a lot of tasks and connect things like contacts and area tags to each task. Overall a great tool but with the potential to have too many features.
* [**Remember the Milk**](http://www.rememberthemilk.com/):
  + Good:
    - Organize tasks by priorities, due dates, tags and more
    - Search tasks and save tasks as smart lists
    - Keep track of tasks with RSS feed reader
    - Task reminders via email, instant messenger (AIM, Gadu-Gadu, Google Talk, ICQ, Jabber, MSN/Windows Live, Skype and Yahoo! are all supported), and SMS
    - Integrates with Gmail, iCal, Outlook and Twitter and offline with Gears
    - Mobile apps available for Android, Blackberry, iPad, iPhone, Windows
    - Variety of 3rd party apps
    - Daily reminders, due time reminders
    - Smart lists: created based on defined criteria, auto-update as tasks change
    - Evernote reminders, add tasks with Siri, email and twitter
  + Bad:
    - Email tasks to Remember the Milk account
    - Price: free, Pro Version is $25 per year
    - User interface is not very elegant or easy to navigate on first look
    - Task actions convoluted and very heavy on user interaction
  + Conclusion:
    - This tool is somewhat standard. The user interface is full of a lot of features or too many parts of each features. It causes confusion and user effort to navigate the menus and tasks. You can use Email to add a task, but would be more intuitive to have email automatically create a task or use a mobile app. This could be an extra unneeded feature, like a few of the other. Some features are very interesting though, like smart lists and Siri integration. Overall standard tool.
* [**Smartytask**](http://www.smartytask.com/):
  + Good:
    - Web app based on *Getting Things Done* methodology
    - Manage and group tasks by actions, contexts, priorities, dates, times
    - Email items directly to your inbox
    - Live on secure servers (No download, no sync, no data to lose on own computer)
    - Runs on browsers like a web email account
    - Clean, easy to navigate, drag and drop interface
    - Note previews on list, edit in place with drop down menus, time and effort estimates
    - Projects has notes, due dates, associated actions
    - Overview screen of active actions/projects
    - Bullet style nested lists, search box for whole system
    - Smart contexts, based on criteria
    - Time required and effort required estimate tags for each task
  + Bad:
    - No mobile app available
    - Price: $9.99 per month or $99 a year
  + Conclusion:
    - This web based tool is very clean and easy to navigate/use. Being backed by a secure server mean you can’t lose you information, but the tool is about lists and tasks, not files, so this seems a little extraneous. Drop down lists give great editing power and there aren’t many screens to shuffle through to get all of your tasks set and seen. The easy to add tags for time required and effort required are great for creating smart contexts. The downside is not having any interfacing with a mobile platform and the cost of using the tool is high.
* [**Todoist**](http://todoist.com/):
  + Good:
    - Similar to Ta-da list, has more features
    - Tasks can have deadlines, contexts, subtasks and priorities
    - Repeating tasks
    - Integrates with Google Gadget, Gmail, Outlook
    - Price: free standard
    - HTML support, offline access with auto sync
    - Mobile browser access, Multiple mobile apps/platforms
    - Drag and drop interface, nested tasks, color-coding
    - Productivity tracking: trend charts, productivity points (karma)
  + Bad:
    - Very simple, resembles an email inbox structure
    - Not many features, just simple lists, tasks and projects
    - Price: $30 per year
    - Free version doesn’t include many features
  + Conclusion:
    - A good tool. It is simple and serves its simple purpose of lists, tasks and projects. Doesn’t really have anything that makes it stand out from the competition except the productivity tracking, which is something our product is aiming to include in some form.
* [**Toodledo**](http://www.toodledo.com/):
  + Good:
    - Feature rich task manager
    - Track tasks by priority, dates, time and more
    - Assign tasks to folders or goals and apply filters to hide unimportant ones
    - Email reminders, SMS (text), RSS lists
    - Auto-Scheduler can analyze a task and assign a time for you to complete it
    - Standalone App or synchronize with website
    - Integrates with Outlook, iCal, Google Gadget, Twitter and more
    - Mobile apps for iPad, iPhone
    - Hotlist: smart list that automatically figures out what important to you right now
    - Customizable Alarms
  + Bad:
    - Collaboration tools can set who can read, add and edit tasks
    - Price: free, Pro Version: $14.95 per year, Mobile app: $2.99
    - No app for Android
  + Conclusion:
    - A powerful to-do list tool. Completely based around lists with smart lists, filters and alarms. Lacks project features and has unnecessary collaboration tools. The interface layout isn’t the greatest or most original as it, like many others, resembles your email inbox.
* [**Vitalist**](http://www.vitalist.com/):
  + Good:
    - *Getting Things Done* management functions
    - Print your lists, export to RSS reader, view in iCal calendar
    - SMS or instant message tasks to account with Twitter
    - Mobile App for iPhone
    - Starring for focus
  + Bad:
    - Group tasks by actions, projects, contexts
    - Collaborative tools for teams
    - Price: free for 5 projects, Upgrades $5 - $10 per month
    - Attached files with upgraded account
    - Not the best looking or clean interface, many popups and new windows
    - Lots of effort for user to enter all information
  + Conclusion:
    - A tool with limited features and very simple purpose. It was made to be a tool based on GTD and only GTD. Lacks email interfacing, scheduling, calendar support. Doesn’t stand out from other products and tasks have a large amount of information associated with them making it seem like too much effort is required to use this tool.
* [**Yast**](http://www.yast.com/):
  + Good:
    - Time-tracking tool
    - Track how much time spend on unimportant tasks
    - Color Coded timelines
    - Track time on mobile phone
    - Timer totals and sub-totals for task level or project level
    - Drag and drop interface
    - Printable timesheets, track time spent on mobile calls
  + Bad:
    - Based around timing tasks
    - Mostly a business tool
    - Collaboration features
    - Limited task functionality with lists, calendars, emails, etc.
    - Based mostly around tracking time spent on tasks, not scheduling
  + Conclusion:
    - This tool is not something that is too close the goal of our own product, as it revolves around timing tasks. The feature itself of timing tasks and seeing how you are using your time is a feature that would work well with our builds.

**Common Features**:

* To-do lists, projects, contexts and tags for labeling
* Some kind of mobile support, browser or app
* Deadlines, subtasks, priorities
* GTD functionality
* Email interfacing, text message integration
* Reminders and alarms
* Starring tasks for importance
* Web-Browser based

**Common Problems**:

* Cluttered/hard to navigate interface
* Too many features/extraneous ones that don’t fit
* Most cost some kind of monthly or yearly fee
* A lot of user effort to set up tasks/projects with information
* Collaboration features on products not designed for teams/groups
* Not many interface with a calendar or don’t do it well
* Not many use contacts that assign to task or projects

**Interesting Features that Stand Out**:

* Time tracking, timelines
* Auto-Scheduler
* Hot-List (Smart Lists)
* Repeating Tasks
* Offline Access/Use
* Time required and effort required estimate tags for each task
* Exports and Logbooks
* Dynamic Next-Lists
* Auto-Starring (importance of a task)
* Task update propagation

**Links**:

* <http://mail.google.com/mail/help/tasks/>
* <https://nirvanahq.com/>
* <http://www.rememberthemilk.com/>
* <http://www.smartytask.com/>
* <http://todoist.com/>
* <http://www.toodledo.com/>
* <http://www.vitalist.com/>
* <http://www.yast.com/>