Where are we going for dinner?

I don't know how it works in your family but here's how it works in mine...

The scenario is this: My wife and I are driving home in the late afternoon or early evening and the conversation goes something like...

Her: "I don't feel like cooking, let's stop somewhere to eat."
Me: "Sure, where shall we go? "
Her: "I don't care, you pick it."
Me: "No, your call. " (This one goes back and forth a few times, until...)
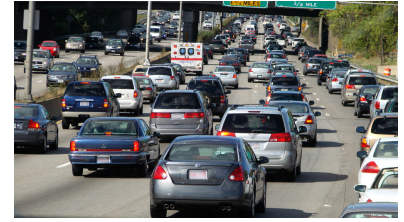Me: "How about Italian?"
Her: "No, we had that on Tuesday."
Me: "OK, your turn; suggest something. "
Her: "I really don't care; your choice. "
Me: "OK, how about Mexican?"
Her: "No, too spicy."

And on and on and on it goes, right? Meanwhile what are we doing? We're still <u>driving</u>! We're wasting gas and chances are we're getting farther and farther from the place we'll finally select!

I'm embarrassed to admit it but I've been involved in product definition discussions that are much like that. A new product development project is initiated and the team members think they are in agreement about what the product should be. Development begins in earnest. After a fair bit of work is done, however, the team discovers that they are not all working with the same vision; what the engineers are designing is not what the marketing folks envisioned at all. Or maybe the marketers have had some new thoughts. Sometimes protracted discussions ensue but, in the meantime, the engineers are still working! Maybe they'll luck out and be moving in the right direction, but, giving due regard to Mr. Murphy, it's unlikely. If that occurs, not only will time and effort be wasted but engineers will be dispirited and the team may be irreparably damaged.

I've finally figured out that, when the dinner discussion begins to go in circles, the best thing to do is pull off the road until agreement is reached.

You need to do the same thing with your product development efforts; don't put the development efforts in gear until you have a shared, clear definition of your destination. That is, until the product parameters are clearly defined and all interested parties are in full agreement with them.

Admittedly, thoughts will evolve as a project progresses but if you can't come to a new, shared vision quickly, pull your project off the road and get people working on something else until you've agreed upon a new destination.