

# Sabre Labs - Framework for Dissent

Deciding what to build is hard. Making the decision as a team is even tougher. Team members often have differing views on which portions of the prototype are most important and what functionality to include. Tensions from the decision-making process can drive teams apart. In Sabre Labs we have adopted a framework for making prototyping and project decisions. This is the framework that seems to work best for our team:

1. Hold a community brainstorming process to determine the core value proposition. The value prop should be a short 1-2 sentence overview of why your project is valuable to your target audience.  
ex. Sharing work-related micro content will create new connections within globally dispersed and cross-domain teams.
2. In the same session, create a divergent list (don't try to agree too much) of assumptions you're making about the project.  
ex. People want to consume micro content from people in the company  
People need to feel like it's private to the company  
People want like buttons for photos  
People don't want to share text without photos
3. Merge similar assumptions – try to get a list of no more than 15 assumptions.
4. Each person ranks every assumption privately from 1-n on a sheet of paper, 1 being the most important or risky to the project. No ties are allowed. The point is to take groupthink out of the system. You do not want to influence each other's rankings.
5. Each person declares his or her rankings. The group facilitator writes each person's rankings in a column beside each assumption. Each person gets his or her own column next to the assumptions.

Pat	Sam	Ryan	Assumption
1	2	5	People want to consume micro...
3	5	1	People need to feel like it's...
etc.			
6. Sum/total the rankings for each assumption and write it out to the side – this will give a sense of priority for the group. Lower numbers are more important.
7. Discuss the rankings. Focus on short discussions between people who disagree most – for instance, in the example above we would have Ryan talk about why they didn't think the first assumption is as important as the other people, then Pat talk about why they think it's so important. Allow people to adjust their rankings – if Ryan decides they agree with Pat, they can change their ranking at this point. If people can prove or disprove dissenting views with facts, that's good. Note extended disagreement and move on (go with the group) – don't dwell too long on one discussion.
8. After you've gone through all the assumptions, re-total / re-order rankings if they changed.
9. Take the top 3-5 assumptions to focus on for your project.