



# Asking for Help vs Advice: Make Better Decisions

## Why I Stopped Asking for Advice and Started Asking for Help Instead

*I used to think more input would lead to better decisions. In practice, it usually led to more noise. The shift from asking for advice to asking for help changed not just my conversations, but the speed and quality of my decisions.*

I used to collect advice like baseball cards. Every coffee meeting, every investor call, every mentor conversation, I'd walk away with a notebook full of opinions and zero clarity on what to do next.

The shift happened when I realized I was optimizing for the wrong thing. Asking for advice feels safer than asking for help, but it's also why most founder conversations go nowhere. When you ask for advice, you're requesting an opinion. When you ask for help, you're requesting an action.

### The Advice Trap

That distinction matters more than it seems. Advice sounds productive because it creates the feeling of momentum, but it often leaves the real decision untouched.

Last year, I spent three months getting advice on our pricing strategy. I talked to twelve different people and got twelve different opinions. The conversations felt useful at the time, with plenty of nodding, plenty of "that's interesting, " and plenty of follow-up emails with articles to read.

But nothing changed. Our pricing stayed the same because I never asked anyone to help me solve a specific problem. I asked what they thought about pricing in general.



Advice expands the field. Help narrows it to a decision.

The hidden cost wasn't just time. It was decision paralysis. Every abstract perspective added another variable to consider instead of removing one. I wasn't getting closer to a choice. I was building a bigger pile of inputs.

### **When Help Beats Advice**

The real turn came when I changed the shape of the request. Instead of asking for a broad opinion, I asked for help with a bounded decision.

During a conversation with a founder who'd scaled a similar business, I didn't ask, "What do you think about our pricing approach?" I asked, "Can you help me figure out whether to price per seat or per feature?"

The conversation became concrete immediately. We pulled up my spreadsheet, looked at actual customer segments, and ran through specific scenarios. By the end of 30 minutes, we had a clear recommendation and a simple test to validate it.

The difference wasn't the person. It was the request. Help requests create a shared problem-solving dynamic that advice requests rarely match. When someone agrees to help with a specific task, they're no longer watching from the sidelines. For a moment, they're in the work with you.

### **The Vulnerability Advantage**

This is also why asking for help feels harder. It's more specific, which means it's more revealing.

"What do you think about my go-to-market strategy?" is safe. "Can you help me decide between these two customer acquisition channels?" puts the actual decision on the table.

That vulnerability is a feature, not a bug. It forces clarity. It makes you name what you want, what's in the way, what you believe might work, how you'll evaluate it, and what conditions would let you decide. In other words, it pushes you to stop circling the problem and start defining it. That's the faint glimmer in the blackness: not certainty, but enough signal to move.



A venture partner told me recently, “I'd rather have a founder ask me to help them solve one specific problem than ask me what I think about their entire strategy. The specific request tells me they've done the work to isolate their real bottleneck.”

The best help request doesn't ask for wisdom in general. It asks for progress on one real constraint.

### **What Good Looks Like**

Once you see the pattern, it's hard to miss. “What do you think about our hiring approach?” becomes “Can you help me decide whether to hire a senior engineer or two junior ones given our current runway?” “Any thoughts on our product roadmap?” becomes “Can you help me prioritize between these three features based on what you've seen work in similar companies?”

The core move is simple: stop asking for thoughts about a topic and start asking for help with a decision between real options under real constraints. This isn't about being transactional. It's about being precise. Good advisors usually don't want more chances to sound smart. They want to help you make progress.

If you need a quick way to pressure-test the request, the Triangulation Method helps. Before the conversation, define four things:

1. The decision you need to make.
2. The options you're choosing between.
3. The constraint that makes the choice hard.
4. The next step you'd take if you left with clarity.

That short exercise changes the conversation before it starts. It gives the other person something solid to work with, and it makes it much easier to tell whether you're asking for help or just collecting perspective.

### **The Litmus Test**

From there, one question usually tells you everything you need to know: if this person said yes to my request, what would we actually do together in the next 30 minutes?



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If the answer is “talk about the space” or “share their perspective, ” you're probably asking for advice. If the answer is “look at my data and help me choose between two options, ” you're asking for help.

There's still a place for advice. Sometimes you do need a wider view. But when you're stuck and need traction, asking for help vs advice is the difference between gathering more opinions and creating a path to a decision.

Most founders aren't short on perspectives. They're short on decision-making support. Once I saw that clearly, I stopped optimizing for more input and started asking for the kind of help that could actually move the work forward.