

HOW TO BECOME A SUPER ASKER



Entrepreneurs never stop asking. They ask people to collaborate with them and to invest in their companies. They ask for advice and help. They ask for resources, such as time, money and knowledge. If you want to succeed as an entrepreneur, you must become a super asker.

Professor **SARAS SARASVATHY**, who studies expert entrepreneurs, says that asking takes practice. Also, how you ask is super important. If you ask someone, “Will you invest in my business?” you will get a **YES** or **NO** answer. The word **NO** stops the conversation. Instead, ask a question that invites conversation—an open-ended question.

“You’re inviting people to think and talk to you about your business,” says Prof. Sarasvathy. “After talking to you, people may decide to join you—as an advisor, a customer or an investor. So those early asks are about building partnerships.”

Here are some examples of effective open-ended asks:

What would it take for you to ...? (e.g., invest \$200 in my business)

How could we work together to ...? (e.g., build a company website)

If you were me, how would you ...? (e.g., sell my product online)

What do you think is the best way to ...? (e.g., promote my products)

What do I need to do to get you to ...? (e.g., buy my product)

Prof. Sarasvathy advises future founders to ask for something from everyone they meet. Here are some of her tips:

Ask For What's Easy to Give

People are happy to help, especially when the request is for something that's easy to give. One time, an aspiring entrepreneur asked founder and CEO of LendingTree Doug LeBda for money to buy airplane tickets. Doug offered him his frequent-flier miles instead. Doug's gift didn't cost him much—it was an affordable loss for him. For the entrepreneur, however, it was a valuable investment in his company.

Ask Even When You Feel Uncomfortable

Asking can be scary. But fear of asking can ruin your chances of achieving your dreams. Start by asking your friends and family. Then practice different ways of asking. You can begin by asking for small things. As you get better at asking, you can ask for bigger things.

Did you know that you can practice asking even if you're not launching a company? You can use it at school and at home. Let's say you want a puppy and your parents keep saying NO. Next time try this: "What would it take for you to get me a puppy?"

Ask for Small AND Big Things

Sometimes, being bold can pay off. When entrepreneur Richard Branson was launching an airline, he asked Boeing to loan him a 747 airplane. "Every resource you need, however big, is an affordable loss for someone, so ask them for it," says Prof. Sarasvathy.