Question Yourself First

There are two ways to ask a question:

1. The way that's designed to make other people feel excited (or non-threatened) about answering you.
2. The way that makes people feel defensive about the fact that you're asking them something.

An example of the first way might be "What can I do to make it easier for you to achieve X?"

An example of the second way might be "Are you an idiot? What in the world were you thinking when you did X?"

An example of the second way might be "How would you address the following concerns?"

An example of the second way might be "I'm not sure if I trust you. How do I know you're not trying to take advantage of me?

The first way keeps the conversation alive, leads to valuable information, and wins the kind of trust that makes solutions possible.

The second way shuts the conversation down, makes the other party feel defensive, and compromises the very foundation of trust upon which relationships are built.

The first way is more kind, generous, and charitable, but that's not the point. It's also more likely to open doors and win people over to your side.

One of my favorite quotes from the bible is "all things are permissible, but not all things are profitable."

You have the permission to ask questions in whatever way you want. But if what you want is more possibility, the second way tends to be more profitable.

Perhaps it's useful to ask yourself the following question before posing any questions to someone else: Am I asking for an answer or am I asking for an argument?