
Christine DiMeola

Vice President
Years at Zeldis: 10



What was the path that led you into your career? Did you always plan to be a market researcher?

Market researchers don't always study market research and decide on it as a career. They often fall into market research as a career, myself included. After I graduated from college as a psychology major, I went to a job fair and got a callback from a market research firm, Response Analysis (now part of GfK). I hadn't heard of them before, and wasn't even aware of market research as a career, so I had to ask them what they did! When the recruiter described the job, it sounded perfect for me.

What resonated with me was the focus on consumer behavior -- what makes people tick, and how they make decisions -- which were similar to aspects of psychology that I had found so fascinating in college. And what really appealed to me was conducting analysis based on what people tell us in surveys; I've been doing it ever since.

How long have you been with Zeldis?

I joined Zeldis ten years ago, after some of my former co-workers from GfK had moved there and told me of an opening. I thought it sounded like a good place to work: A market research company that hired and nurtured smart, curious people and fostered a team-oriented environment.

Have you always had the same job at Zeldis?

Coming into Zeldis, most of my experience was in Quantitative work, with a particular focus on large-scale surveys. I had played a minor role in some Qual research, watching groups and writing reports, but it was just a small part of my work.

At Zeldis, over time the amount of Qual I am involved with has become a significant part of my work. Our approach here is for all researchers to have or develop expertise in both approaches, so we are able to integrate the findings and elevate the learning as the client's needs dictate.

How is that different from other research firms?

At many larger firms, separate divisions often exist based upon methodology type. For example, they might have a group dedicated to Qual research, but those moderators work across all industries and aren't usually immersed in the client's business as we are. Because we are intimately knowledgeable about the industries we serve, our researchers are able to lead both the Qual and Quant aspects of a project for a client. Our understanding of the target audience and the client's issues helps us effectively recommend a methodology-agnostic research design. We come into the research with an understanding of the questions that the client wants to ask and experience in getting those questions answered.

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You now have responsibility for managing the research staff. What's involved in that?

I oversee day-to-day management of both the research and field operations staff at Zeldis. My job is to ensure the research staff has what they need to be successful: the tools, feedback, training, and all necessary resources to support them. Our training is very individualized. We maintain and share a process document, but the training each person receives depends on what their experience is, their strengths and weaknesses, etc. We also have a shadowing program, where new team members work closely with more experienced colleagues.

What is a typical day at work for you?

I'm not sure there is a typical day. Variety is one of the things I like about market research. There are multiple phases to every project, such as writing questionnaires, monitoring the field, and moderating. And since we each do both Qual and Quant – that's what makes it interesting.

I would say the main part of my job is coordinating the various players involved in a project and making sure we're all aligned.

What makes you good at your job? What would you look for in a person to work with you?

To be successful in this job, not only at Zeldis, is to be detail-oriented and to have a good analytical mind. It's important not just to know that the numbers are right, but also to know: What do they mean? You see the data and you have to think, is this what the client wants to know? At Zeldis we focus on not just what we learned in the research but why it matters and what it means for our clients.

Other qualities we look for at Zeldis include the ability to think outside the box and come up with solutions. I can teach someone skills that a market researcher needs, but I can't necessarily teach someone to be an analytical thinker. You can try to mold someone, but a person who's a natural problem-solver is going to be better at it.

Is there a particular philosophy or perspective that guides your work? Something in your personal life that applies to both?

I think I learned my guiding philosophy from my father, who has always been hard-working and dedicated. Anything I do, I do to the best of my ability and I take pride in my work. I've always done that – I feel it's what I owe to the people I work for and work with. Personal dedication is the ethic I strive for in everything I do.