
Fred Gaudios

Senior Account Director
Years at Zeldis: 10



How long have you been at Zeldis?

I just celebrated my ten-year anniversary with Zeldis. I joined right from graduate school (I received a master's degree in social psychology from Boston College.) I had previously worked at a big research company for one year out of undergrad at Rutgers. But although I had gone back and forth between academic and applied research, by the time I received the job offer from Zeldis, I knew that my heart was in applied research.

You have a unique job title at Zeldis.

Yes. My first job was as a project director, and now, after several promotions, I'm Senior Account Director, the only position at Zeldis with 'account' in the title.

My title reflects that in addition to my ongoing research responsibilities, I'm part of the sales and marketing team for Zeldis. While it sometimes feels like having two jobs, the role is very dynamic and it means I get to do the research and also participate in the important work of growing the company's business.

In some other market research companies, there are people who purely do sales. But it's become abundantly clear to me that it's way more effective to be able to describe -- as a researcher talking to researchers -- what we can do. It makes a difference that I speak the same language and also walk the walk, which I do daily.

Has today's marketplace for research services become more challenging for growth?

It's true that the marketplace is very competitive, and the inundation of messaging makes it more difficult for a salesperson to get its message to the right people. But the systems we have put in place, plus the growth of our capabilities and staff, have helped us be successful. Everyone at Zeldis is on top of their game, and the perception of our uniqueness in serving our clients is becoming more widespread.

We've increased and, I think, smartened up our communications, including our activity on social media. People in the industry seem to like the substantive content that we post and we get a lot of positive comments and interaction from that.

How would you describe the culture at Zeldis?

Our culture sets us apart. We're a relationship building company that does research really well: we care about people, we have the personal touch many companies in the industry lack, and we're the kind of company people join and don't leave. It's a truly fine place to work.

I'd also say it's a surprisingly low-key place to work, for the seriousness of the work we do. We're not a company of people who take themselves too seriously, we support each other, there's very little drama and backstabbing. It's a comfortable, friendly place to be. We end up with a better product as a result.

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A Zeldis Perspective | Fred Gaudios, Senior Account Director continued...

Zeldis is known for its approach to qual/quant research. How does that also set you apart?

Our research is high quality; our qual/quant approach is second to none. I believe that there are no other firms that employ this integrated approach as effectively as we do.

The ability to do both qual and quant – and to plan for the best blend and timing of methodologies -- has been part of our DNA the whole time I've been here. But we're talking about it more now, as more of our clients are realizing the benefits. It has been a big part of our growth.

For example, we were doing a big project for a first-time client, fielding four qual/quant studies. The client was surprised at the level of detail we were able to get from a small number of interviews, and at how well we were able to refine the quantitative portion from those results. The qualitative stage was really able to give us a sneak preview of precisely what we needed to quantify.

Tell us about your involvement with Thought Leadership at Zeldis.

I've been involved in our Thought Leadership studies since the beginning. These are publicly released projects that we've produced for clients -- as well as many on our own initiative -- on many topics of broad interest to the industry. My first study was on millennial professionals' attitudes toward life insurance in 2013 and 2014. It's important that we do these for a number of reasons. Of course it demonstrates how well we do research as a company, but it also gets critical info out there. At Zeldis we play a role in validating the research our clients do, and if we can help add to the industry's knowledge, that is better for everyone.

Zeldis places a lot of emphasis on leadership within the company as well.

Yes. I think our management is truly effective in accomplishing leadership goals, whether it's internally or externally.

I'm basically "Zeldis-trained." I grew up learning the Zeldis way, and that includes being given the bandwidth to grow and learn. For example, (Zeldis management) saw me as a salesperson years before I did. I have definitely grown into my role.

For example, researchers tend to be a certain personality type -- thoughtful and ultimately decisive. I truly believe that people who purchase market research services are constantly being talked to, so in my interactions with them, my approach is to be mostly listening, finding out their needs and issues before talking about what we can provide to help them.

What's something people don't know about you?

Zeldis has a group of people who are distance runners, and a group of craft beer aficionados. I'm in both groups; I also brew my own beer and when something comes out awesome, I bring in batches for my colleagues to sample. And one more thing: having a 4 year-old daughter, Samantha, has made me more efficient and patient at work. Amazing what a preschooler can teach you about the basic elements of humanity!