

Amy Rey
Executive Vice President
Years at Zeldis: 17



How did you get started in market research?

I was a recent college grad with a degree in Psychology and got a call from a friend about a job at Response Analysis, a market research firm. Although I had no idea what market research was (going in) at the time, I learned the basic skill set quickly, including the ins and outs of project management. I earned my Master's in Social Psychology while working at Response Analysis (which was eventually acquired by GfK). Then I met Ken Zeldis, who asked me to come work at Zeldis Research. I joined the company in 2001.

Is your focus more Quantitative or Qualitative research?

Partly because of my graduate school work, I initially had more of a Quantitative mindset, even though I had exposure to both and was doing some moderating at Response Analysis. I remember initially thinking, "What's the use of Qualitative research when you're only talking to a few people? Where are the numbers?"

But then I came to see how Qual research can inform the Quant. When you talk to the audience in-depth, you get a much more insightful view. It helps you frame the questions, add new ones or subtract irrelevant ones, and generally makes the Quantitative process much more effective. Now I see the impact of both sides of the research coin, and especially the effectiveness of using them together. The exception is that on occasion, you do Qual and every person you talk to says 'no' to the idea presented. That's an easy no-go decision – one that saves our clients time and money.

I now do 50/50 Qual and Quant and it is generally part of our integrated approach, which I think is unique at Zeldis. Many companies specialize in one or the other.

As part of Zeldis management, how is leadership developed at the company? How has it benefitted you, and how do you develop it in others?

Zeldis has faith in its people to learn and develop. We believe our team members have the essential talent and skills, and we give them the autonomy they need to grow into leadership roles should they want them.

I tell the people I mentor that there's a turning point in developing into a leader: It's when you feel confident in making the decision yourself. The turning point for me was an important industry conference I was scheduled to attend with Ken Zeldis. At the last moment, he missed the train and called to tell me, "You're on your own -- good luck!" I was terrified; I had never done anything like that by myself. But forcing me to go alone – and emphasizing he believed I could do it – was invigorating. I went to the conference, and we won a client out of it. It was a big step in my growth. We encourage these opportunities repeatedly in the company. Anyone at Zeldis who wants to take the initiative, can do so.

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I know you are involved in a great deal of “Thought Leadership” work at Zeldis. Can you tell me a little bit about this work?

Thought Leadership is about taking a broader approach to the business, not just about solving a client's specific problems but also about illuminating issues that matter. In a way, it's about striving for and encouraging leadership for all of us in the industry.

Most of what we do for our clients is to help the bottom line. But many of our clients also want to drive the industry forward, contribute to the greater good, and educate the consumer. Sure it helps build their overall brand, but it's also a way to look at the broader picture, and find ways to contribute.

At Zeldis, we make Thought Leadership a priority too. Because we work with so many clients, we get to see things at a broader level, and help identify issues faced by many across the whole spectrum. We are able to take the initiative to help illuminate these issues, such as our work in understanding Millennials or how people understand changes in their healthcare delivery.

How has Zeldis changed since you began working there?

Zeldis is a very different company from when I started- it has tripled or quadrupled in size. Our client base is bigger and serves more industries. And we have more of a hierarchy now to serve it. It's great to see that arc of growth, but it's even more amazing to see that we have been able to maintain our culture of people who enjoy both what they do and each other. It's very unique.