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Years at Zeldis: 23



What was your first job at Zeldis?

I was hired as a “Gal Friday” and since it was pre-internet, we were doing a lot of mail surveys. So we were running back and forth to the off-set printer, post office and bank for \$1 bills, while waiting for faxes of changes on our questionnaires and reports. Soon we were doing more focus groups, and I learned the art of developing screeners and recruitment.

Now I have a team, and my job is to get the right people in the right seats, handle client arrangements, and ensure the client’s experience exceeds their expectations. Before we begin recruiting, I have a call with our researcher and the client to review objectives and discuss what they’re trying to learn. Usually they have well-defined criteria, but from our years of experience, we can often suggest ideas they find useful and help the projects run more smoothly.

How has your job changed over 23 years?

By far, technology has had the biggest impact. The sheer number of qualitative options and the methods have become so much more sophisticated: online focus groups, web IDIs, bulletin boards and so on. And technology has helped us be smarter recruiters: we can now more easily reach niche segments like very high net-worth individuals, C-suite executives, or hard-to-reach physician specialists as a few examples. We’ve even recruited for people who run wind farms!

Back when we did only in-person focus groups, we would have to sort through clunky VHS tapes, and then more recently DVDs. Now we’re getting everything digitally, which is so much easier to organize and edit. The tools we have are amazing. The digital recordings have become one of the most important parts of our deliverables. We are frequently embedding respondent clips in our reports so that clients are able to visually share the respondents’ reactions and feedback with their stakeholders.

So has technology taken over market research?

No, not completely. Clients still like focus groups; they like to observe their customers’ body language and hear what they have to say from the back room among their colleagues.

What do you look for when recruiting for new positions for your team?

Organizational ability, detail-oriented, curious, and open-minded. By open-minded I mean, someone who is not afraid to ask for help or be willing to give it. Which pretty much defines the Zeldis culture.

What makes Zeldis different than other market research firms?

I think it’s all about the working environment here. Zeldis cares about its people and wants us to succeed. From the beginning there is a deep level of trust in the staff, and the support makes us a stronger team and better able to help our clients.