

## Kristina Witzling

Executive Vice President  
Years at Zeldis: 13



### How did you get started in market research?

In college I majored in Spanish, journalism and political science. My coursework featured a lot of measurement science – audience numbers, Nielsen ratings, polling, etc., and that interested me because it helps you figure out “what makes people tick.” A job in social policy research – which also allowed me to use my Spanish! – then fell into my lap. But after a year, I decided that market research was where I should be, and I spent the next ten years at several large, full-service research providers before joining Amy (Rey), Doris (Kaiser) and Ken (Zeldis.)

### Is your research focus more Quantitative or Qualitative? How has that changed over the years, and how has it affected the P&C insurance research practice you lead at Zeldis?

Early in my career, I conducted mostly Quant research although I also did some in-depth interviews (IDIs). But I had always enjoyed the Qual, and we had a need to do more of that with the educational and publishing clients we had at the time. So I just jumped In. It may partly be my personality – I like interacting with people – but I also liked getting the results first hand. And when I began working on P&C insurance shortly after I started at Zeldis in 2005, Qual enabled me to get a handle on a new industry more quickly. You get to see and hear directly from the key audiences!

I do think that having my roots in Quant, coupled with the passion I have developed for Qual, enables me to take a more holistic approach to the needs of our clients. This approach helps us to effectively identify and synthesize the insights from both phases. The expertise I’ve built in P&C comes from both Qual and Quant studies, which provide both a deep and wide understanding of the marketplace that I can then apply to any P&C study. And of course, this approach is the same used by all the industry practices at Zeldis.

### As part of Zeldis management, how do you develop leadership skills at the company?

To begin with, we hire people who share our core values and then give them the freedom to manage their own jobs. We use the Entrepreneurial Operating System, which keeps us focused on our goals and how we can achieve them. Part of this is to ensure that our people are getting what they need to become leaders. If they aren’t, how can we help them? So, for example, people who didn’t moderate before are now moderating; people who had one account now have three. It’s exciting to see everyone grow.

### You are very involved in the use of new technologies in market research to gain insights from respondents. What are the one or two most notable introductions you’ve witnessed – and used – over your time at Zeldis?

Probably the biggest changes have come from the increased integration of video via webcams, which we use for both Qual and Quant. Now we can reach and hear from people we couldn’t access before. Educators, doctors, and other busy professionals whom we couldn’t get into a focus group room are now recording and posting their comments. That has really changed the shape of research over the past 15 years. And we can easily share their responses with clients, so they can instantly see and hear from their prospects and other stakeholders in their businesses.

A Zeldis Perspective | Kristina Witzling, Executive Vice President  
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**As the primary person responsible for the security of client data at Zeldis, you recently oversaw the company's earning HITRUST Certified status. How has this changed your business?**

Certified status from HITRUST has helped both our internal and external processes. Clients have accepted it in lieu of other certifications, and it also expedites our onboarding of vendors, many of whom are familiar with the HITRUST procedures. The certification has helped us to be recognized as offering the same rigorous security protocols as larger firms.

**How has Zeldis changed as a company since you began working there?**

Many things have changed. We have increased and deepened our specialization in certain fields such as insurance, health care, and financial services. Our technology, our integration of Qual and Quant into the insights discovery process, and our reporting protocols are all more advanced than ever. But our core values haven't changed. What has stayed constant, even though we are larger and have more people, is the dedication to clients.

The commitment to go the extra mile, to do whatever is required to get the job done, hasn't changed in my 13 years at Zeldis!