

23 Million Consumers and the AGS Laboratories

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Toward the end of 2006, the AGS Laboratories management team pondered a question many companies ask: how could we get the biggest bang for the marketing buck by reaching the broadest range of consumers? There are many ways to spend our marketing dollars, from television to magazines, but in the end, we came up with a solution that focused on an emerging trend: podcasts.

A podcast is an audio broadcast distributed over the internet. Podcasts use syndicated feed for playback on portable media players and personal computers.

Modest Campaign: Surprising Results

Starting in January, AGS Laboratories began producing podcasts, playing them on iTunes and a multi-media distribution center, Multi Vu. The podcasts reached 4,200 website newsrooms and 3,600 websites per distribution. We featured American Gem Society CEO Ruth Batson in the first podcast, "*Diamond Buying Resolutions*," a story playing off of New Year's resolutions. The podcast gave tips the consumer needed to know before purchasing a diamond.

After distributing the podcast on the World Wide Web, we waited for tracking results from Multivu. We were surprised at the findings. In total, forty-seven website newsrooms posted the podcast to their sites, including powerhouse usatoday.com, but, more importantly, we reached an audience of 3.3 million consumers.

The following podcasts had similar results. With each podcast, we picked a timely topic and tied that theme with tips on buying diamonds. For example, on Earth Day (April 22) we launched, "From Earth to Mine." The podcast featured AGS Laboratories Executive Director, Peter Yantzer, talking about how diamonds are mined and giving a gemological overview of the rarest of gems. Peter also weaved in valuable tips about selecting a trusted jeweler. The podcast reached an audience of five million consumers.

As of September, the AGS Lab podcasts have reached an audience of 23 million listeners. Besides usatoday.com, other notable websites posting the podcasts have included forbes.com, latimes.com, AOL money, Yahoo Business, dallasmorningtimes.com and krontv.com in San Francisco

Keys to a Successful Podcast

With any marketing campaign, there are always lessons learned. A few tips we learned at the Lab for a successful podcast include the following:

1. Pick a timely topic. We tied each podcast into a current theme. The AGS Laboratories' March podcast was called, "March Madness: the Final 4 Cs." Our podcaster introduced Peter by first referring to basketball's March Madness, before tying the games into the four Cs of diamond grading. October's podcast featured AGS Laboratories CEO and President in "Taking the Fear out of Diamond Buying." Frank gave insider tips to make the consumer more comfortable in their diamond buying purchase.
2. Keep it short. All AGS Laboratories' podcasts are under ten minutes. Our goal: get in, give our message succinctly, and leave on a high note.
3. Say it 150 times, 7 different ways. Each podcasts ends with a similar message: buy from a jeweler you can trust, such as an AGS retailer, and request documents from the only laboratory created to protect the consumer: AGS Laboratories.
4. Have a knowledgeable spokesperson. All our podcasts feature an expert on the topic at hand. Peter Yantzer tackles technical subjects, Frank Dallahan covers industry insights, while Ruth Batson and Cathy Calhoun (Calhoun Jewelers, Royersford, PA) lend a hand on jewelry trends and purchasing advice.
5. Promote your podcast. For each podcast, we sent out an email blast, and often sent out press releases to the industry's trade magazines. As a result of the press, jewelers often ask if they can link the AGS Lab podcast to their website. As we direct them to agslab.com to link to the download, we experienced the added benefit of increased website traffic.

A Wider Net

Podcasts are an affordable alternative for companies who want to market to a large group of consumers, but not pay the rates that television or radio demand. The team at AGS Laboratories knew that podcasts were a growing medium, and decided that it was an area worth testing. Our initial goal was to reach nine million consumers, but in a nine month period we more than doubled our expected results. Another happy consequence of the program's success was that it drove viewers to our website, and we saw a 51% increase in traffic. Never ones to rest on our laurels, we plan to take a hard look at our website and in 2008, make it more user-friendly and a larger resource for consumers and the trade. Stay tuned for 2008. The AGS Laboratories team plans to continue the podcast success story.

CALL OUT BOX: If you would like to link to the AGS Laboratories website, or post the AGS Labs podcasts to your site, please email marketing@agslab.com, or call 702.233.6120 x1110.

SIDEBAR

A Sampling of our Podcast

Before each podcast, the AGS Laboratories sends out an email blast to the trade announcing the podcast and giving a teaser on the topic. Here's a sampling of those blasts, as well as the results of the podcasts:

Month	Topic – Email Blast Description	Major Site Downloads	Audience
April:	From Earth to Mine – Diamonds as a Natural Resource: On April 22, 1970, 20 million people across America celebrated the first Earth Day in the United States. Now Earth Day is celebrated annually around the globe. Earth Day has evolved into a world-wide campaign to protect our global environment and protect our natural resources. You may not link a luxury item to a natural resource, but Peter Yantzer, Executive Director of AGS Laboratories will explain the connection.	CNN.comMoney, EarthTimes.com	4,950,000
July	Women's Self Purchase: A Diamond Is Forever noticed the women's fine jewelry self purchase trend and launched the "Right Hand Ring" marketing campaign. Now, women are buying fine jewelry to mark special occasions, or commemorate a special bond with a family member. Audio Podcast of Cathy Calhoun, Owner of Calhoun Jewelers in Royersford, Pennsylvania.	Forbes.com, AOL Money	2,237,000
August	From Russia with Love: The title 'From Russia with Love' is more than just the name of a famous James Bond movie. As it happens, Russia was once the third largest exporter and miner of diamonds. Now, Russia still produces 21% of the world's diamonds, but not all of these diamonds come from the mine—some are produced synthetically. Audio Podcast of Frank Dallahan, AGS Laboratories.	MotleyFool.com, Yahoo Business	4,958,000