

AGS Laboratories
The Perfect Proposal
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Interviewer: An estimated 61% of all American consumers celebrate Valentine's Day, representing \$13.7 billion in gift sales. Of this total market, 22% are men who are planning on buying something that glitters for this occasion. That makes today's guest very happy! I'm Danielle Adair, and welcome to *The Cutting Edge*. I'm here with Frank Dallahan, President and CEO of AGS Laboratories. Frank...thanks for being with us.

Frank: It's a pleasure to be back.

Interviewer: Frank, I can't think of a more romantic time to pop the question than Valentine's Day.

Frank: I agree, Danielle. After all, how many holidays are created just for couples?

Interviewer: I'm just taking a wild guess, but I bet you have some good advice for anyone out there who is contemplating popping the question.

Frank: You know, Danielle, Valentine's Day—and the month of February—has long been THE month for romance. It is, by all accounts, a "lovers' holiday." So why not pop the question?

Interviewer: Okay, before we get into that, let's take a step back a couple hundred years and talk about how Valentine's Day got its start.

Frank: Sure. You know, The Italians are known for *amore*. We have Emperor Claudius II of Rome to thank indirectly for Valentine's Day> He had hoped to build a large army comprised of male volunteers. Most men – even during *that* time – didn't want to fight in a war or leave their families. So Claudius thought that if he didn't allow any marriages, men would have no other choice than to want to go to war. Because of this, marriages were performed in secret, by a man with the name Valentine.

Interviewer: Now that *is* romantic....

Frank: Well it was until he was caught and thrown in jail. Young people from all over came to the prison throwing flowers and notes up to his window in support of love. The daughter of the prison guard was allowed to visit Valentine and as the story goes, they became close friends. In fact, the day he died – which was February 14, 269 A. D. – he left a note for her signed "Love from your Valentine".

Interviewer: Probably considered the very first Valentine card.

Frank: Probably.

Interviewer: Out of curiosity, do men still like to propose on Valentine's Day?

Frank: It's definitely popular – and probably one of the most romantic things you can do – but, interestingly enough only 8% of all engagements in the United States happen during the month of February.

Interviewer: Okay, for all those lovers out there, what do you, um, propose they do if popping the question:

Frank: First of all, make sure you have a ring. None of this empty box stuff. Get your honey a ring. It says you've thought about this, you're serious, and you are prepared.

Interviewer: Well, what if you don't know what kind of diamond she wants?

Frank: Before you propose, talk about the possibility of getting married. Make sure it is something that you both want. Don't forget to discuss any major issues, like whether you both want children, are both willing to relocate if necessary for the other's career, you know . . . the big life choices that may come up.

Interviewer: So the proposal should not be a surprise.

Frank: Even though you have discussed marriage, make the proposal a surprise. Find a moment she won't be suspecting.

Interviewer: Do you have any ideas for an unforgettable proposal?

Frank: Have a friend or family member set up a picnic -- complete with wine and cheese, or course -- for you in a park. Take your girlfriend for a hike on a route where you'll stumble upon this surprise "Proposal Picnic."

Interviewer: That's romantic.

Frank: Isn't it? How about this: Gather a bunch of your friends and family for a party. Have everyone in attendance put on a T-shirt bearing one of the letters in the phrase "Will You Marry Me?" When you walk in the room with your girlfriend, suggest a group picture and let the shirts speak for themselves.

Interviewer: I do! I do!

Frank: Your jumping to the wedding vows, Danielle. Here are a couple more proposal ideas. Send your girlfriend on a treasure hunt. Start with a clue at home, then send her on a tour of your favorite spots all over town. When she gets to the last hint, the prize should be you on one knee. Tie a red velvet ribbon from one

spot in your home to another. Attach little notes recalling perfect moments in your relationship along the way. You wait at the last stop, ring in hand.

Interviewer: This is putting me in a very romantic mood. What if you want to mix in a little technology into your proposal?

Frank: Why not create your own podcast proposal and download it onto her iPod? Or you could upload a video of your proposal on YouTube and then tell her you have something interesting you want her to watch. Make sure you are in the room with her while she views it, don't just send her the email link. Here's something else you could do. Borrow her digital camera and head to her favorite local outdoor spot. Bring a friend with you and have posters made with the words "will," "you," "marry," "me?" Have your friend photograph you holding each one in a different position. Then, let her know you borrowed her camera and ask if she will upload your photos.

Interviewer: I'm feeling the love, Frank.

Frank: Then you'll love this one, but it takes some work: Create your own crossword puzzle based on events, inside jokes and things like that from your relationship, and be prepared to help her work it out over breakfast. There's even a site that helps you create a crossword puzzle: Crosswordpuzzlegames.com

Interviewer: These are all very great ideas. But how do you figure out how to say to your loved one what's in your heart. What words make up the perfect proposal?

Frank: Well, naturally, for each couple it will be different. Ask yourself some questions: what about her inspires you? When did you realize she was the one you wanted to spend the rest of your life with? What goals and values do you both share? Try to articulate all that to her in the proposal.

Interviewer: Frank, let's talk for a moment about some tips that you can give our listeners. What should they consider before they purchase a diamond?

Frank : First thing I tell anyone who is thinking of proposing to their sweetheart is to visit an American Gem Society jeweler and have them show you a diamond graded by the AGS Laboratories that carries an Ideal grade diamond. Compare that to the biggest diamond you can buy for your budget. I think you'll notice a difference.

Interviewer: What are some tips for lovers on a budget?

Frank: That's simple, talk candidly with your jeweler. Tell him how much you'd like to spend. Jewelers are more than happy to work with you in satisfying not only your budget requirements, but also in getting you the best product for your budget.

Interviewer: And I know you are an advocate of buying a diamond with a diamond grading report.

Frank: I sure am. And The American Gem Society Laboratories has the toughest grading standards in the industry, which is for the full benefit of the consumer. Let me give you a real world example of how this impacts you. Sometimes a diamond's grade may be borderline between two grades. When that is the case, we grade more conservatively, which means that any consumer buying a diamond with our grading reports can be assured that the quality stated in the diamond grading report matches the quality of the diamond. That means that, ultimately, they are paying a fair price for that diamond, as well.

Interviewer: Okay, one last question . . . if someone wants more information on buying diamonds, can you point them in the right direction?

Frank: Don't take a walk down the aisle without first visiting agslab.com or americangemsociety.org, where you'll find everything you need to know about diamond grading standards and tips on diamond buying. Or ask an American Gem Society jeweler to explain the 4 C's in greater detail. You can find a qualified jeweler at the Americangemsociety.org website.

Interviewer: Thank you Frank. I'm officially in the mood for romance. We've been talking to Frank Dallahan of AGS Laboratories. I'm Danielle Adiar. Here's wishing everyone a very happy Valentine's Day.