

AGS LABORATORIES

23 Million Consumers

by Donna Jolly, CSA, Director of Marketing, AGS Laboratories

Toward the end of 2006, the American Gem Society 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 (e.g., iPod) and personal computers.

Modest Campaign: Surprising Results

Starting in January, the AGS Laboratories began producing podcasts, playing them on iTunes and the multimedia distribution center, MultiVu. The podcasts reached 4,200 Web site newsrooms and 3,600 Web sites 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 Web site newsrooms posted the podcast to their sites, including powerhouse *usatoday.com*, but more important, 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,



The AGS Laboratories podcasts can be found in the iTunes Store. To download iTunes (Mac and Windows versions), go to: www.apple.com/itunes/

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 gemstone. Peter also wove 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 twenty-three million listeners. Besides *usatoday.com*, other notable Web sites 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 to a current theme. The AGS Laboratories' March podcast was called *March Madness: The Final 4 Cs*. Before tying the games into the four Cs of

diamond grading, our podcaster introduced Peter by first referring to college basketball's March Madness. October's podcast featured AGS Laboratories CEO and President Frank Dallahan in *Taking the Fear out of Diamond Buying*. Frank gave insider tips to make the consumer more comfortable in his or her 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, seven different ways. Each podcast 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, and Ruth Batson and Cathy Calhoun (Calhoun Jewelers,

Royersford, Penn.) lend a hand on jewelry trends and purchasing advice.

5. Promote your podcast.


Before each podcast, we send out an e-mail blast, and we often send out press releases to industry trade magazines. As a result of the press coverage, jewelers often ask if they can link the AGS Lab podcast to their Web sites. As we direct them to agslab.com to link to the download, we have experienced the added benefit of increased Web site traffic.

A Wider Net

Podcasts are an affordable alternative for companies that 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 Web site, and we saw a 51% increase in traffic. Never ones to rest on our laurels, we will take a hard look at our Web site. In the coming year, we plan to make the site more user-friendly and advance its position as a leading resource for consumers and the trade.

Stay tuned for 2008 as the AGS Laboratories team continues the podcast success story. 



A Sample of the AGS Podcasts

Before each podcast, the AGS Laboratories sends out an e-mail 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	E-mail Blast Description	Major Sites	Audience
April: <i>From Earth to Mine — Diamonds As a Natural Resource</i>	On April 22, 1970, twenty 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 worldwide 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.com Money EarthTimes.com	4,950,000
July: <i>Women Celebrate Independence with Fine Jewelry Purchase</i>	<i>A Diamond Is Forever</i> 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, Penn.	Forbes.com AOL Money	2,237,000
August: <i>From Russia with Love</i>	The title <i>From Russia with Love</i> is not 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

