

Al Prodgers is a self-employed stand-up comedian.

Workplace found out what that entails

Describe your day-to-day job

Essentially it's the business of making up and telling jokes. On a good day it's about fun and entertainment, using humour to make people laugh, challenge preconceptions and spread some love.

But, because the market in South Africa is still quite small, you have to be versatile. On a bad day it can amount to nothing more than telling stories about one's genitals for beer money.

What are some of the most challenging aspects of your job?

On stage, dealing with the unexpected, like a heckler, is always a challenge.

Off stage, there's no structure or oversight at all. Nothing stops you from spending all day on the couch, watching cricket instead of putting together a fresh comedy set or researching a retirement annuity.

There's also no support structure for when things go wrong.

Many corporate clients still regard comedy as a "wild card". That's understandable, because some events have been ruined by offensive performances, but reliable, professional comics spend an inordinate amount of time apologising for the transgressions of others.

What are some of the most rewarding aspects of your job?

The immediacy is incredibly satisfying, even addictive. The topical and interactive nature of comedy allows you to change your game plan half way through a sentence if necessary.

Describe an average day?

I'd love to expand the showbiz mythology of late night excess and debauchery, but truthfully, the family wakes me up really early.

I work on new material for my own shows first thing in the morning when creativity seems to come easiest.

Then I spend most of the day writing scripts for business clients.

Early evening may see me providing the entertainment at a corporate event or golf day and later I could be on stage at a club trying out that new



FUNNY MAN: being a stand-up comedian is a serious job says Al Prodgers.



**nice work
if you can get it**

An addictive and very satisfying job

material I wrote this morning.

What are the growth opportunities in this position?

There's plenty opportunity to build character!

It's particularly rewarding to take stand-up to parts of the country that aren't usually visited by comedy. People interact and get involved and the show always heads off on an unexpected, exciting tangent.

I've also been fortunate to perform to audiences in Canada, Europe and the Middle East.

Who are the other key players in your department and describe briefly what they do?

A pivotal element of any show is the compere. The work of an MC is an invisible art that either sets up an enjoyable evening for everyone or makes the comics sweat bullets for the whole gig.

Most important of all is the audience. A crowd that is open minded and "up for it" creates a positive energy in the room. Then anything can happen and the comedy sparkles.

How do you get into the profession?

Comics come from all walks of life. Some of the greats have included ex-soldiers, welders and investment bankers.

An ability to write is a huge advantage, so journalism would be an asset. And some sort of drama training helps a stand-up communicate more effectively, but there's not much that can prepare one for stand-up.

What sort of personality does one need to do this job?

Most comedians I know are neither extroverts nor egotists. In fact, we tend to be a bit morose.

