



## THE PARALLEL LIVES OF OUR IPS #5

Combining stand-up comedy and consulting – a  
guest article from Anish Shah

### 1. When you are not working as an IP, what do you do?

I am either buying my very pregnant wife the only food she can currently stomach, Gatorade and bagels, or telling jokes because I am a comedian. I have been fortunate enough to perform around the world, tape a couple of comedy specials, write for CBS, and perform at corporate events for Microsoft, BCG, Wells Fargo, and about a hundred others.

### 2. How did you personally decide to become a stand-up comedian?

After 5 years of 80-hour weeks at McKinsey, I left to join a small tech company called SPSS as their Head of Strategy, where the hours were also intense. When we sold the company to IBM, I experienced my first sweet taste of corporate hours. I would be done by 7 pm and was astonished to find that normal people do things on a Tuesday night. I decided to use my newfound freedom on comedy and fell in love. Now I float between independent projects and comedy.

### 3. Where do you get your material? How does working as an IP help you get material?

I tend to find humor in the way people interact with each other. Therefore, in a work setting that is often seeing the comedy in interviews, conference calls, and of course “feedback sessions”.

### 4. What are the secrets for telling everyday jokes in order to get the biggest laughs?

It is as simple as writing it down. Everybody has a bunch of funny thoughts and interactions every day, but they soon forget about them. If you are noting them, as “This interaction with this bank teller is a great story for the next time I am talking to someone about customer service” you have a funny story that is appropriate in the context of consulting. As far as the techniques to telling jokes well, the best advice I can give is to end on the funny party. For example, the first joke I ever told on stage was about my divorce. It was, “It’s not bad being a divorcee, but I’d rather be a widower”. The funny part is “widower” so I end there and people know to laugh there. It would not work as well if I said, “When comparing divorcees and widowers, being a widower would be better”. People would not know where to laugh and they might think you are just kind of a sociopath.

**5. What advice would you give new comedians just starting out?**

First piece of advice: They say you should get a laugh every 15 seconds. Second piece of advice: If you can think of doing anything else, do it, because living your life being judged by a room full of people every 15 seconds is a pretty weird way to live.

**6. Any advice from one entrepreneurial IP to the others?**

I perform all over so if they go to my website, [www.anishcomedy.com](http://www.anishcomedy.com), they can just sign up to be notified when I am in their town. Alternatively, they can bring me in to perform at their corporate, charity, college or private events.

**7. What is the hardest part of being a comedian?**

I am drinking better coffee, but not more coffee. Usually three coffees per day. Two in the morning and one after lunch. I enjoy experimenting with brewing methods such as a Chemex filter, Aeropress or Cold brew. We offer the accessories we prefer in our shop. The only trouble is that I cannot drink coffee from standard office machines anymore... professional bias I guess!

**8. What does the world of comedy need more of today?**

Older voices. In comedy, most people start out young and either are one of the few to make it big or they get out. I would love to see a better path for people who are later in life to come and share their stories.



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