

# Funny business

**Barry McLeod** from *Comics on the Run* has been doing stand-up comedy, MC-ing and managing events for the past fifteen years. During that time, he's learnt a thing or two about how to make a business out of being funny.

It doesn't hurt that McLeod sounds like Billy Connolly but this Scotsman's trajectory into a comedy career was far from direct. He started out as a surveyor, moved into Project Management and was then encouraged by his professor to do an MBA.

Many essays later, he emerged as a highly educated business professional with a knack for public performance.

His first gig came about because his partner, Caryn Morgan from CMA Events, was seeking quotes for a professional MC for an upcoming event. The quotes that were coming in were extortionate so McLeod thought he would give it a go.

"My first corporate job was in 1999 for the Australian Association of Insurance Accountants," he said. "MC-ing a conference is about keeping things on time, on topic and keeping people engaged. Being funny is the bonus!"

After the success of this first foray, McLeod decided to 'run with the comics' and started entering competitions and open mic nights. In 2003, he started touring *Comics on the Run* with a group of comedian friends, headlined by Akhmal Saleh. "It was all about taking comedy to the country and seeing a bit of Australia at the same time," said McLeod. The group still tours extensively and plays to rooms of 55 right up to 550.

The experience of MC-ing the *Comics on the Run* gigs as an experienced event manager (McLeod had worked with his wife in CMA events for over ten years) made him realise how critical it was to have an events background in order to make it all run smoothly.

"It's not just about being funny. It's about being a host, having the knack to fuel the audience and being able to bring them along on the journey," said McLeod. ■

[www.barrymcleod.com.au](http://www.barrymcleod.com.au)



## Barry McLeod from *Comics on the Run* shares his tips for choosing a comedy act for a business event.

- They must follow the brief. You rely on them for their comic timing and entertainment value, but a good brief will keep them in line with your message.
- They must avoid inappropriate and off-topic tangents. Leave that for the club room. You shouldn't offend even one person because that's one person too many.
- They must have a solid business background to really understand the objectives. The requirement for business events is very different to club comedy. You really need to drill down into marketing, sales, finance or whatever it is and keep everything relevant. It looks much easier than it is.