

# How marketers can prevent 'capture'

 By [Devon Meerholz](#)

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State capture. When this term first started making its appearance in public discourse towards the end of the previous administration, it was greeted with derision by many.



Image credit: Geoff Park on Unsplash.

“State capture” seemed such a new and fanciful concept and, yet, the World Bank had already started using the term as far back as 2000 to describe the looting of the Soviet state that occurred post-Communism.

Today, we know state capture as systemic corruption in which private individuals attempt to influence national decision-making for their advantage. It’s far bigger than just one fabulously-wealthy expat family or a single head of state.

## Nasty, self-driven rot

State capture is a nasty, self-driven rot that sets in. As we have seen during the current hearings of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector, state capture very much begins and ends with the individual.

The endless procession of selfish rogues the law-abiding public has had to endure clearly-illustrates that this threat to our

democracy is not driven by faceless organisations but by very visible individuals who just couldn't give a damn.



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It seems that anywhere there is a perceived endless supply of cash, at least some human beings will attempt to step in and direct it their way, with scant regard for the later consequences for themselves or the looted organisation.

Because the capturing of public and private organisations is driven by individual interests, all of this has had me wondering, how can marketers prevent the capturing of their organisations?

Further, how can we ensure we as brand custodians are never captured by internal and external forces that would damage the intellectual property under our care?

### Stay present, avoid presents

The media and marketing industry is familiar with the consequences of capture. When it comes to the former, in particular, we've seen several venerable publishing houses overwhelmed by partisan interests with catastrophic outcomes. The resultant output is so bad, these titles are forced to survive on the proceeds of legal notices, government advertorials and similarly sad quasi-advertising efforts.

Lesson one in avoiding personal capture is straight out of a mafia movie. Never accept gifts. Once you accept that first gift, they've got you. Seriously, consult your organisation's gifting policy for the proper etiquette when it comes to colleagues and clients giving you birthday, anniversary and other presents. If your employer doesn't have a gifting policy in place, be proactive and offer to draft one.



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You might consider developing a relationship with a respected business leader or community activist, for example, to help keep you on the right path. Not everything in our industry is black and white and having a mentor might help you navigate the shades of grey that are sure to pop up during any media and marketing career.

Most media and marketing firms today publish a lot of information on their websites around their values, mission statement and so on. Joining a like-minded set of colleagues similarly-committed to a bright South African future will help a lot when it comes to avoiding the quagmire of personal and organisational capture.

Related to the above, you can help keep your organisation free from the murky world of bribes and kickbacks by helping to arrange the kind of guest speakers that would inject a breath of fresh air and transparency into the organisation.

Someone from a local charity, business association or community initiative could remind all concerned that rejecting corruption is the only way to secure a good future for our children, friends and family.

### ABOUT DEVON MEERHOLZ

Devon Meerholz is Chief Creative Officer at IMmobile, a global software and solutions group with a presence in over 60 countries worldwide. Devon's unique approach to creativity is put to good use at IMmobile's Johannesburg office. Here he works with a multidisciplinary team to develop SA-specific mobile initiatives from bank statements to cross-platform

personalised marketing videos that enable the company's clients to speak to current and potential customers in more visual, appealing and creative ways.

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