

# Govt departments stealing ideas for friends?

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

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South Africa's new national sport - "Jobs for Pals" - has taken a new turn with allegations that government departments are stealing marketing ideas and passing them on to friends.

This is what apparently happens. A company with a great idea for an event, promotion or campaign, presents it to a functionary at a government department who asks a few questions and promises to look into it to see if it has merit.

## The old story

Dozens of email and phone messages go unanswered and then the prospective supplier is told that the department isn't interested.

A month or so after that, there's an announcement by said department of something uncannily similar. Names have been changed, as well as a few details, but generally speaking it's pretty much the identical concept that was turned down and which is now being handled for the department by another supplier.

## Won't blow the whistle

The tragedy, of course, is that whenever I get these irate callers and suggest that they either go public with their grievances or lodge an official complaint with the minister in the presidency tasked with investigating exactly this kind of thing, I am told that any whistleblower will almost "certainly be ostracised and blacklisted to the point of never getting any more government business."

In addition to which they believe they will probably be accused by the private sector of being "opportunists or sore losers".

## Letting sleeping dogs lie

Which, I believe, is absolute rubbish. Because this is really what is wrong with this country - people don't want to be seen to be complaining; don't want to take a stand against corruption; and would rather just let sleeping dogs lie.

But, they're quite happy to do all they can to get the media to plead their case.

One thing I have determined is that every company that has contacted me with these allegations does not have membership of the Marketing Association of South Africa ([www.marketingsa.co.za](http://www.marketingsa.co.za)). Perhaps if they joined, they would find someone who

was willing to take a stand on their behalf.

## ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on [moerdyk@gmail.com](mailto:moerdyk@gmail.com) and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

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