

Christmas Party Survival Guide

For HR Managers

Set your stall out

Make staff aware that unacceptable behaviour won't be tolerated and remind them that although it is a party, it's still a work event and that they are representing the company.

Keep control of conversations

Avoid talking to staff about anything work-related such as grievances or pay. Explain that this isn't the time or place and instead talk about things outside of work. Likewise, keep an ear out for any managers agreeing to promises they can't keep once they've had a couple of drinks...

Promote Inclusivity

Whatever type of Christmas Party is being organised by your company, it's important not to marginalise employees or make them feel that they can't attend. Do whatever you can to make sure that your party is inclusive but **don't force people to attend**. The Christmas party should always be a choice.

Be careful with entertainment

It's not uncommon for many Christmas parties to have a theme or for events to be held where there are a number of companies celebrating at the same venue. If the venue is providing an entertainment theme, make sure that it fits with your company's values. For example, if it's a 'casino night' it might not be appropriate as it can promote gambling or alienate members of staff who are unable to take part.

Keep your distance

It goes without saying that the alcohol consumed at work Christmas parties can be the literal tipping point for bad behaviour and so keeping a close eye on what's consumed is important. A lot of companies will provide a free bar or at least free drink tokens to staff and so you should make sure soft drinks are part of the deal with the venue not just so those who don't drink don't have to fork out on the night but also so you can intervene where necessary to provide someone with a buffer if you can see things getting out of hand.

Think about beyond the party

Absence management can be difficult enough in the month of December without throwing Christmas party hangovers into the mix. If your party is on a weekday, remind staff that they'll be expected to work the following day if they're scheduled in to do so. Be aware of any after parties and communicate with staff the role the company has when it comes to duty of care.

For Staff

Be a good mixer

Don't be daunted by having to socialise with colleagues at a Christmas party. Instead, use it as an opportunity to get to know the people you work with a little better and interact with staff from other departments. The fact that you're not in the workplace should help ease the nerves and so saying hello and making conversation should be a lot easier at a party than it would during work hours.

Don't be snappy

This can apply to a couple of things. Firstly, the Christmas party (and the alcohol that's involved) does not give you free reign to vent at your boss or at colleagues. It may have been a hard year, you may feel you have a point to make; but a party is not the time or place to make it and at best you'll create tension during a time of celebration or at worst create a scene that may make your position untenable once you walk back into work. Secondly, whilst there may be plenty of opportunities to take a quick photo using your smartphone of a colleague doing something embarrassing, don't forget that it's a party after all. It's not a chance to humiliate people on social media at a time when letting their hair down for a couple of hours is acceptable.

Don't be the topic of conversation afterwards

Nobody wants to be the person everyone in the office is talking about when they return to work following the Christmas party. Whilst playing the class clown can seem like a good idea at the time, don't lose sight of the fact that you have to work with everyone after Christmas and so you shouldn't do anything that can be deemed unprofessional and tarnish your reputation with colleagues.

Beware Christmas Spirits

Know your limits when it comes to drinking shots or accepting drinks from colleagues. If you've not tried a type of alcoholic drink before, it may not be a good idea to give it a go in front of people you see every day at work. There's nothing wrong with enjoying a drink or two but be careful not to overdo it or the chances are you'll be nursing a double whammy of a hangover the following day and a dose of shame the next time you walk into work.

Never Drink and Drive!

One in eight road deaths still involves a driver over the limit. Drink-driving can increase around the Christmas period and there's absolutely no excuse for getting behind the wheel over the limit.