

Christmas Party Survival

Christmas parties at work, whether it's a tame lunchtime trip to a local restaurant or a full blown wild night out should, of course, be fun.

But equally you need to tread that fine line between being a heavy handed kill joy or deciding to let anything go, which ends up with a difficult situation to deal with once the party is over and you are back at work the next day.

In our experience it is wise to set a few clear ground rules in advance of the event that make it clear to everyone what is and what isn't an acceptable standard without being a bar humbug killjoy.

Here goes.....

1. Standards – make them clear in advance

Set clear standards for acceptable behaviour in advance, especially if clients attend. Don't be afraid of telling it like it is. Some employers may think it is totally acceptable for everyone to let their hair down in whatever way they like; others will take a more measured approach. Whatever your stance is, please just spell it out to ensure there are no surprises.

2. Food and drink – and not just alcoholic ones please

Make sure you provide food to suit everyone early on in the evening and do make sure there are non alcoholic drinks for those who don't consume alcohol for religious or other reasons. Please do not allow under 18's to consume alcohol. We know it is Christmas but you have a duty of care, make it clear that it is unacceptable.

3. Mistletoe – sorry but it's a no go!

Please remove the mistletoe; you really don't want to be dealing with a harassment case. Make it clear in your bullying and harassment training that employees know what constitutes harassment of any kind and just remove the temptation. What is a light hearted and a funny joke to one person is totally unacceptable behaviour to another.

4. Have fun - *but* you have to come to work the next day

Make it clear that not turning up to work the next day, (unless annual leave is booked), is unacceptable especially if the reason is believed to be related to excessive alcohol consumption. If employees do not turn up, it should be treated as unauthorised absence and dealt with accordingly. Remember too that however you treat one person has to apply to any other person who breaches the line in the same way, fairness and consistency at all times please.

5. Safety – plan for safe journeys home

Plan ahead and remind employees to plan their journey home and encourage employees to go home in groups or even better book taxis to ensure safe arrival. All of us are venerable when we may have had a drink or two and encourage everyone to plan ahead with safety in mind.

6. A few pointers for the boss – yes you!

However much fun you are having, please take a few words of advice from a seasoned party goer, (really you don't want to know!), and HR professional.

As the boss do not stay to the bitter end. Nominate someone else to remain to the end. Your employees like to see you come along and then leave so they can really let their hair down – and talk about you, you know they will!

Please do not let go too far yourself try and limit your own alcohol consumption. It might be Christmas but you need to face your employees the next day with a clear head and conscience.

Finally however tempting it is please do not talk shop! It's an easy opportunity for employees who demeanour is loosened by a tot or two of alcohol to corner you and ask for that much sought after promotion! Politely and firmly change the subject and move on.

In summary

Have a successful and fun time, let your hair down, build a little team spirit, get your dancing shoes on but just know when to stop, when to leave and when to draw the line.

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