

Guidelines for a Successful Holiday Party

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In the past, the company Christmas party was a raucous event which provided everyone with much to talk about for months after it occurred. It was most definitely a Christmas and not a Holiday party. The liquor flowed freely. Skits skewered the stereotypical differences between men and women. Everyone was required to attend. People relied on others to remind them of their conga line activities. However, once they remembered, the lawsuits against the employers started. Here are some guidelines for employers and employees to follow so they may better enjoy their holiday gatherings.

Employers need to remember that if they require non-exempt employees to attend the festivities, they will need to pay the non-exempt employees for those hours. Such payments will need to include any applicable overtime payments. It is generally better practice not to require employees to attend these parties.

Some employers like to hand out bonuses at these parties. If the bonus is a discretionary bonus that the employer does not plan to provide every year, the employer should include a cover letter explaining that in the same envelope as the bonus.

There are millions of people in the United States who do not celebrate Christmas. Employers must be sensitive to other religions and should take care not to make people who do not celebrate Christmas feel uncomfortable. In recognition of this fact, many companies call their end of year celebrations holiday parties instead of Christmas parties. Employers might consider having New Year celebrations instead of Christmas parties.

Occasionally, open bars lead to drunk driving with deadly results. In order to avoid liability for an employee's drunk driving accident, employers are wise not to provide too much alcohol. If an employee becomes intoxicated at an employer-sponsored holiday party, it is a good idea for the employer to prevent the employee from driving away.

Another problem with too much alcohol is that it can lower people's inhibitions too much, leading to behavior that is not tolerated in the workplace. If there are going to be skits at an employer-sponsored holiday party, the employer should preview the skits to ensure that the content is acceptable. Employers should confirm that their sexual harassment policies are clear to the employees.

Employees need to remember that when they attend a company party, it is a work party and they should remain on their best behavior, as if they were at work, because they are at work. They should realize that they can be personally liable for their actions at and

after company parties. Employees should enjoy spending time with their coworkers, but save their lamp-shaded table dancing for other occasions.