



# Holiday Party Do's *and* Don'ts for Employers

*HR pros know how much of a compliance headache office holiday parties can be. It's often "all hands on deck" when dealing with the aftermath. Here are four do's and don'ts to make your party fun and help prevent those legal hangovers.*



**Do**

## Be Inclusive of All Employees

You may have employees who don't drink or celebrate the holidays in general. Plus, nearly two-thirds of employees say they don't look forward to the corporate shindig. Make sure your holiday party is welcoming to all types of revelers. And don't forget about your remote employees.



**Do**

## Remind Employees of Policies

More than half of company holiday parties involve alcohol, which can lead to inappropriate behavior. It's a good idea to send out a memo and remind employees that the party, even if it's held off-site, is an extension of the workplace. Supervisors should also help set the tone with appropriate behavior.



**Do**

## Offer Transportation Options

Companies should be aware of the dangers of allowing employees who are drinking at the party to drive home. Here's a tip: Provide a discrete way to reimburse workers who decide to take a cab or use a ride-sharing service to get home.



**Do**

## Respond to Complaints Promptly

No matter how many precautions you take, there could be issues that arise from a company event. Nearly 15 percent of people in a Monster poll said they regretted saying or doing something at an office party. Have procedures in place to address complaints and follow up in a timely manner.



**Don't**

## Make Attendance Mandatory

About two-thirds of workers say they feel it's an unwritten rule to make an appearance at a holiday party. Many also fear reprisals for failing to attend. Employers should alert managers and supervisors that showing up is an option for employees, and adverse action shouldn't be taken against those who don't attend.



**Don't**

## Include Religion

In general, the focus of any holiday party shouldn't be on religion. However, some symbols of Christmas — Santa Claus and a tree, for example — are considered by the courts to be secular decorations. Still, you should be considerate of people's backgrounds and forgo any overtly religious activities.



**Don't**

## Have an Open or Self-Serve Bar

Drinking and holiday parties often go hand in hand. Just don't let it get out of hand. To curb excessive drinking and the actions that sometimes come along with it, a professional bartender trained not to overserve people can be helpful, or offer drink tickets. Free booze and no supervision over the bar is a bad idea.



**Don't**

## Hang Mistletoe

The common theme here? Common sense. And that means not hanging mistletoe. For obvious reasons. Sexual harassment can become a big issue at holiday parties. Make your holiday party fun. Don't invite trouble for your HR team.