



Avoid career suicide at your holiday office party

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By Camille McCaleb

The annual holiday office party is an opportunity for employees to let loose and forget about deadlines, reports and quotas. While office holiday gatherings are meant to reward employees for their hard work throughout the year, there's usually one employee who - let's just say -has a little too much fun.

Here are some useful guidelines both employers and employees can follow to ensure the party doesn't turn into an all-out debauchery:

- **Designate a sober driver.** As with any situation, getting behind the wheel after drinking does not mix. Plus, you want to make sure you are alive and well to make it back to work Monday morning.
- **Avoid excessive drinking.** Although holiday office parties are intended for good fun, you don't necessarily want to be the butt of all your co-workers' jokes because you had too much eggnog.
- **Steer clear of underage consumption.** Business owners should be mindful of underage drinking and establish ground rules to avoid the matter at all costs. Wristbands on for employees 21 years and older can help bartenders and managers stay mindful of not serving young employees.
- **Leave office stress at the office.** Remember this is a time to relax and socialize. Take your mind off the big meeting next week and enjoy the food, drinks and company of your co-workers.
- **Bring work-appropriate gifts.** If a gift exchange is scheduled, bring something suitable for everyone and in clean taste. "Secret Santa" type of exchanges involve random recipients, and what the wine connoisseur CEO may like most likely differs from what the young intern in marketing wants.
- **Remain professional.** Although the setting has changed from work to play, treat co-

workers and higher management professionally. The productive atmosphere of an office should not be altered because of what took place at a holiday office party.

The bottom line is employees can still have a good time and interact with one another while conducting themselves appropriately. One last thing to remember: Your actions - whether positive or negative - can have a long-term impact on your professional career.

Source: Camille McCaleb, vice president of Creative Business Resources, a professional employer organization providing human resources outsourcing to businesses in Arizona and the Southwest. Details: cbri.com.