

Company Holiday Party Planning Checklist

A practical planning guide for employee holiday parties, year-end celebrations, client events, awards dinners, and company gatherings.

Company: _____	Date: _____
Venue: _____	Expected Guests: _____
Event Lead: _____	Target Budget: \$ _____

4-6 Months Before

- Set the event goal: employee appreciation, holiday celebration, awards, client entertainment, fundraising, or a combination.
- Choose the date, start/end time, and a backup date if possible.
- Set the approved budget and identify who has spending authority.
- Estimate attendance and decide whether employees may bring a guest.
- Reserve the venue and confirm capacity, parking, accessibility, food service, and ending time.
- Book key vendors: DJ/MC, entertainment, caterer, photographer, photo booth, decor, transportation, and AV support.
- Decide whether the event will be formal, semi-formal, casual, themed, dinner-focused, or dance-focused.
- Confirm company policies affecting alcohol, gifts, raffles, contests, transportation, or employee conduct.

2-3 Months Before

- Send a save-the-date or initial employee announcement.
- Choose the food and beverage format: plated meal, buffet, stations, hors d'oeuvres, or casual service.
- Plan the entertainment style and desired music atmosphere.
- Decide whether there will be awards, speeches, games, raffles, door prizes, or a gift exchange.
- Create a preliminary event timeline.
- Confirm decor, branding, lighting, signage, and any holiday theme.
- Arrange hotel rooms or transportation if employees will be traveling.
- Ask the venue about insurance, security, coat check, overtime, cleanup, and vendor load-in.

6-8 Weeks Before

- Send formal invitations or open registration.
- Collect RSVPs, guest names, dietary restrictions, and accessibility needs.
- Finalize the menu and beverage plan.
- Confirm DJ/MC responsibilities, announcements, music style, and special cues.
- Choose award recipients and confirm presenters.
- Order trophies, plaques, gifts, branded items, or recognition materials.
- Plan gift exchange, raffle, or door-prize rules if used.
- Confirm photography and any photo booth or branded backdrop.

3-4 Weeks Before

- Review registration numbers and follow up with employees who have not responded.
- Give the venue and caterer an updated guest count.
- Finalize table layout and seating if assigned seating is used.
- Complete award scripts, speaker notes, and presentation order.
- Create presentation slides, videos, or company-year highlights.
- Choose walk-up music or short musical cues for awards and speakers.
- Confirm games and activities are workplace-appropriate and voluntary.
- Prepare signage for registration, coat check, restrooms, seating, and event areas.

1-2 Weeks Before

- Confirm final guest count with the venue, caterer, and key vendors.
- Review vendor arrival, setup, performance, and breakdown times.
- Finalize the run-of-show and distribute it to the event team.
- Test presentation files, videos, laptops, projectors, adapters, and microphones.
- Prepare a backup copy of all presentations on a second device or USB drive.
- Confirm awards, gifts, raffle items, tickets, and display materials.
- Prepare name badges or a registration list if needed.
- Confirm transportation, rideshare codes, shuttles, or designated-driver plans if applicable.

Holiday Party Entertainment & Music

- Choose an arrival atmosphere: upbeat background music, holiday music, or general favorites.
- Tell the DJ whether holiday music should be a major part of the event or only a small accent.
- Provide company-appropriate must-play and do-not-play selections.
- Share employee age ranges and general music preferences with the DJ.
- Plan dinner or networking music at a comfortable conversation level.
- Schedule dancing after major speeches, awards, or presentations when possible.
- Give the DJ/MC exact pronunciations for executives, award recipients, and company names.
- Decide in advance whether employee song requests will be allowed.

Awards, Speeches & Recognition

- Keep the award program organized and reasonably paced.
- Confirm the award order and presenter for each recognition.
- Arrange awards in presentation order before the program begins.
- Provide the DJ/MC or AV operator with the final list of names and titles.
- Use a microphone for every speech, even in a smaller room.
- Keep speeches concise so the event continues to feel celebratory.
- Schedule group or department photos immediately after major recognitions when practical.

Event Day - Before Guests Arrive

- Check in with the venue contact and event team.
- Confirm registration, coat check, gift, raffle, and award areas are ready.
- Inspect tables, centerpieces, signage, and company branding.
- Test microphones, music, projectors, screens, videos, and presentation laptops.
- Confirm the timeline with the DJ/MC, caterer, photographer, venue, and speakers.
- Place awards, gifts, and presentation materials in the correct order.
- Make sure walkways, exits, dance floor, and vendor work areas are clear.
- Have one event lead authorized to make timing or program decisions.

During the Party

- Allow enough social time before formal activities.
- Keep welcome remarks brief and upbeat.
- Coordinate food service with speeches and awards.
- Keep games and participation optional; never pressure employees to participate.
- Monitor music volume so conversation remains comfortable when appropriate.
- Take important company and group photos before guests begin leaving.
- Keep prizes, gifts, and awards secure until distributed.
- Watch the timeline so the event does not run into overtime unexpectedly.

Before the Event Ends

- Make final announcements, transportation reminders, or thank-you remarks.
- Distribute remaining prizes, gifts, or company materials.
- Collect company property, banners, presentation equipment, and confidential materials.
- Check for gifts, coats, phones, and personal belongings.
- Confirm vendor breakdown and venue cleanup responsibilities.
- Arrange safe transportation for any guest who should not drive.

Quick Company Holiday Party Timeline

Time	Activity / Moment	Person Responsible
_____	Doors open / guest arrival	_____
_____	Welcome / opening remarks	_____
_____	Dinner / refreshments	_____
_____	Awards / recognition / speeches	_____
_____	Raffle / gifts / special activity	_____
_____	Entertainment / dancing	_____
_____	Final announcements	_____
_____	Event close / transportation	_____

Planning Tip: The best company holiday parties balance recognition with relaxation. Handle announcements and awards efficiently, then leave plenty of time for employees to socialize, enjoy the entertainment, and celebrate together.