

CORPORATE HOLIDAY EVENT TIPS & IDEAS

The Do's and Dont's for
having a productive,
engaging and morale
boosting event!

For Leaders

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TIPS FOR PLANNING YOUR HOLIDAY EVENT

Whether to have an end-of-the-year event or not, should not be a question. The mere fact that we've all made it to this point in 2021 an accomplishment. Make sure that you use this moment to show your appreciation to your team and boost morale and engagement. It's not too late to plan a great event!

Between being a clean standup comedian, corporate speaker and Human Resources professional, I've had my fair share of corporate events. Many of which were super amazing and then there were the cringy ones.

I have a bad case of 'Second Hand Embarrassment'
(whereas I suffer from the effects of other people being embarrassed, lol!).

Below are some thoughts and guidance that I've been sharing with my corporate clients to avoid cringy, unproductive end-of-the-year events.

#1: Understand the Assignment

Why are you having an event? Is it to show appreciation to your staff? Do you want to boost morale? Are you trying to fundraise or grow your customer base?

Know the purpose of your event up front and make sure that your activities, itinerary, money spent and etc. supports your goal.

If the event is to boost morale solely, don't make it a work meeting. If you want to appreciate your employees, make sure you carve out time to say 'Thank you' during the event. If it's to fundraise, don't go crazy spending on the party favors and decorations... and so on.

Understanding the assignment ensures that (a) you have goals to measure the success of the event and that (b) you set the expectations of everyone involved.



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#2: Be mindful about what you name the event

I have a client that I encouraged to rename their event from the traditional 'Thanksgiving Celebration' or 'Christmas Party' to 'Employee Appreciation Dinner' or something similar. There are so many people who don't celebrate "traditional" holidays. As we are all growing and becoming more inclusive workplaces and more sophisticated professionals, we must accept the fact that asking someone to participate in something that they don't believe in and/or identify with can cause unnecessary tension and low morale to say the least. Also to not acknowledge other beliefs and traditions while celebrating your own is harmful.

While we are on the subject, don't do a roll call asking the team "If you're offended by us saying 'Christmas' then raise your hand..." This type of micro-aggression is damaging. No one has to tell you their personal beliefs and don't assume that your beliefs are superior.



Just call the event what it is. Examples:

Employee Appreciation Brunch

End of the Year Celebration

Holiday Party

Covid-Kick-Rock Party! (hehe!)

Naming the event specific to its purpose as opposed to a specific holiday, eliminates offense and keeps the environment welcoming.

#2: Be thoughtful about the details

In case you haven't been paying attention, empathy is winning. Be considerate as you plan the event. Think about everyone's experience in conjunction with the reason you're having the event.



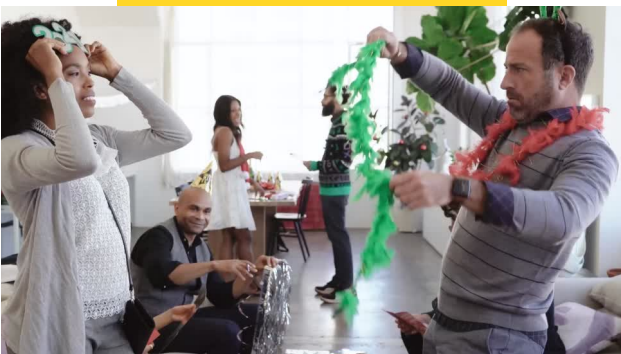
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Things to consider:

-Time: Don't plan an event on a workday that starts at 6p... at your mansion 45 minutes away... when your team doesn't get off until 5:30. (Insert side eyes) Think about employees who'd like to change clothes, get their family squared away, may have transportation insecurities, etc.

-Activities: Don't do a golf theme (for example), using golfing terminology when 50% of the team has never been on a golf course. Nor should you play a game that is only fun if you're already a subject expert. Use themes and activities that everyone can be included in or learn quickly on the spot. The goal is enjoyment for everyone right?

Thoughtfulness in the logistics sends the message to everyone that you want them to participate and that you care about the obstacles, hardships and inconveniences that this event may propose.



#2: Alcohol considerations and responsibilities

If you're allowing alcohol at your event and especially offering an open bar, be mindful that you may need to call an Uber for an employee or two. The last thing you need is for a tragic accident caused by an employee leaving your event intoxicated. Be prepared to have that conversation. Stating the tone upfront helps eliminate the awkwardness or embarrassment later.

Example: "Hey Everyone! Drinks are on the house! If you appear to be unable to drive, I'll get you an Uber home, no problem. You can arrange to get your car tomorrow. Have fun tonight!"

Yes, the employee that doesn't drink can volunteer to give rides, but do not volunteer. Alcohol creates some weird situations. I've seen sexual harassment claims, people get sick in cars/on the premise and confidential information being shared because of alcohol. **Don't put people in the middle of something they don't ask for. Also, don't make anyone feel bad about free liquor.**



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#5: Don't sleep on virtual events.

Literally and figuratively (hehe). Virtual events are a perfect solution if you still have Covid reservations or logistic concerns or budget limitations. I recommend not having boring Ms. Suzy (sorry if your name is Suzy) lead the event or else people will literally go to sleep. Spice up the virtual event so it doesn't feel like a normal work-Zoom. Plan the event with fun activities that work well virtually. There are some super creative and fun event ideas online.

Here's one of my favorite ideas for a virtual event:

Play bingo, outlining the words in your mission statement or maybe your goals for the upcoming year. Make sure to have exciting prizes to add energy to the game.

I recently hosted an employee appreciation virtual brunch. I gave a comedic talk and led the games. We curated boxes that we mailed to the employees in advance. In the boxes we gave each employee a bag of my coffee (Black please.) a diversity mug, gift cards and snacks. The boxes had the bingo cards in them and it was an hour of fun!

***Virtual events can be just, if not more, effective than in-person events.
Use technology to your advantage!***

This is a great opportunity to let your team know that you appreciate them. If they decide not to participate, don't take it personally. If you haven't already, start sending out your save the date memos and plan to have a great time. If you're afraid that you can't deliver on the fun part, then call me. I got you!

Thanks for reading!

Allison Moore

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