



Mineral



Question of the Week

December 13, 2023

Question

What tips do you have for hosting an end-of-year company holiday party?

ANSWER

A holiday party can be a great way to celebrate the year with employees, but it can come with risks. We recommend the following best practices:

- Unless you intend to pay employees for their time at the event, make attendance optional. Employees should not feel pressured in any way to attend.
- Avoid conducting any work-related activities at the event, such as award presentations or company updates. To further support the non-work nature of the event, hold it outside of work hours and, if funding and practical considerations allow, off-site with the opportunity for employees to bring a guest.
- Maintain a generic holiday, winter, or year-end theme for the event so employees don't associate it with any specific religious holiday, and everyone feels welcome.
- In advance of the event, set expectations around respectful behavior. Remind employees that company policies, including those regarding harassment, apply at the event.
- Reach out to employees about their food needs and preferences. Choose a location that can provide plenty of options for all employees to enjoy food and beverages of their

choice. Ask the venue to post signs indicating ingredients employees want or need to avoid (allergens, meat, gluten, etc.).

- If you serve alcohol, provide equally “fancy” beverages for non-drinkers. For instance, if you’re serving wine, offer bottled mineral water, and if you have someone mixing cocktails, also offer unique mocktails.
- If alcoholic beverages are available, consider hosting a cash bar or providing employees with a set number of drink tickets to encourage responsible alcohol consumption. Arranging group transportation may also be advisable. Even if you don’t want or plan to provide ride services, don’t think twice about calling and paying for one if an intoxicated employee has no way home other than driving themselves. This isn’t the time to teach employees a lesson, and from a cost-benefit point of view, it may be the best \$30 the company ever spends.

This Q&A does not constitute legal advice and does not address state or local law.