HOLIDAY PLANNING & VENUE GUIDE

Office Holiday Parties: A Hit With Workers

Company-Sponsored Charity Events Also a Popular Way to Spread Holiday Cheer, Survey Shows

How do workers like to celebrate the holidays with colleagues? A new survey from OfficeTeam shows the traditional office party tops most employees’ wish lists. More than half (52 percent) of workers interviewed said their favorite work-related holiday celebration is a company party. Twenty-four percent would choose participating in a charitable activity with coworkers.

But the study also finds that employees are saying, “Bah, humbug!” to a few things: inconvenient scheduling (27 percent) and boring activities (21 percent) were identified as the most disliked aspects of the office holiday party.

The survey of office workers was developed by OfficeTeam, a leading staffing service specializing in the placement of highly skilled administrative professionals. It was conducted by an independent research firm and is based on telephone interviews with more than 400 U.S. workers 18 years of age or older and employed in office environments.

Workers were asked, “In which one of the following ways would you most like to celebrate the holidays at work?” Their responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Off-site party</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site party/luncheon</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charitable activity (e.g., donation drive, volunteering as a group)</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal gift exchange</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office decorations</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d rather not celebrate the holidays at work</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know/no answer</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workers also were asked, “Which one of the following, if any, is your least favorite thing when it comes to office holiday parties?” Their responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inconvenient scheduling</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring activities</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer pressure to attend</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworkers misbehaving</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworkers dressing inappropriately</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/don’t know</td>
<td>2%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

“Many employees look forward to the office holiday party because it offers a chance to unwind with colleagues,” said Robert Hosking, executive director of OfficeTeam. “These celebrations can also be the perfect opportunity to recognize people for their hard work throughout the year.”

Hosking added, “To get everyone in the holiday spirit, party organizers should involve staff members in the planning process and discuss event dates in advance.”

OfficeTeam offers the following dos and don’ts when planning holiday parties at work:

**Do:**
- Allow time to acknowledge employees for their accomplishments.
- Keep celebrations nondenominational so everyone can take part in the merriment.
- Generate excitement for the event in emails and the company newsletter. Also, encourage interested employees to help with planning and decorations. Don’t let the occasional no-show dampen your spirits.
- Leave anyone out in the cold.
- Allow time to acknowledge employees for their accomplishments, but make sure activities aren’t all work-related.

**Don’t:**
- Be a scrooge about sharing the details.
- Plan things just in the “nick” of time.
- Assume it’s impossible to be frugal yet festive.
- Let holiday grinches ruin the fun.
- Get “wrapped up” in shoptalk.
- Get employees know the dress code, directions and whether guests are allowed ahead of time.
- Be mindful of your budget. Celebrations can be enjoyable and build camaraderie without breaking the bank.
- Have a party that’s fa-la-la-la-blah.
- Get employee input on location, activities and menu. Want to do something a little different than a fancy meal or white elephant gift exchange? Organizing a holiday donation drive or volunteering at a nonprofit organization can be a fun way to spread good cheer.
- Plan things just in the “nick” of time.
- Let holiday grinches ruin the fun.
- Get “wrapped up” in shoptalk.
- Let employees know the dress code, directions and whether guests are allowed ahead of time.

Information for this article was provided by OfficeTeam, a Robert Half company and the nation’s leading staffing service specializing in the temporary placement of highly skilled office and administrative support professionals. The company has more than 300 locations worldwide. More information, including online job search services and the OfficeTeam blog can be found at officeteam.com.
Ventura County West: the Ultimate Holiday Hideaway

Pristine beaches. Flourishing farms. Sloping vineyards. These idyllic scenes make up Ventura County West. Year-round sunny skies, vibrant downtowns, locally-sourced cuisine and sparkling harbors provide a stunning backdrop for groups who want to get away.

“Ventura County West is a short drive from Los Angeles, but, once you arrive, you couldn’t feel further away,” said Rebekah Evans, Executive Director of the Ventura County Lodging Association (VCLA). “I always tell visitors, ‘Park your car, put on your flip flops and get ready for the time of your life!’”

Perfect for athletic tournaments and corporate groups, the destination features 200,000 square feet of event space and 5,000 guest rooms in over 60 hotels and inns. The seaside cities of Ventura, Camarillo, Oxnard and Port Hueneme bring small-town charm and exceptional hospitality to groups both large and small, accommodating up to 10,000 guests.

Weddings and Festivities

The Hilton Garden Inn Camarillo hosts elegant events with full-service, farm-to-table catering and state-of-the-art audio visual services. The hotel’s Italian-inspired Adagio Bella Gardens Banquet and Reception Hall, a stunning gazebo with vaulted ceilings and hand-painted Roman pillars, can hold up to 250 guests. For those planning an extended stay, the Garden Inn’s sister hotel, Homewood Suites, is located on the same property. Camarillo boasts beautiful and unique spaces for social events, including the historic Camarillo Ranch and McCormick Home Ranch, both of which bring historic charm to barnyard weddings and garden parties.

Whether it’s before or after the big event, groups love to tour through the Ventura County Wine Trail, which links 11 artisan wineries and several gourmet eateries in Camarillo, Oxnard and Ventura. Other excursions include The Collection in Oxnard, a vibrant outdoor shopping and lifestyle center, and Ventura Harbor, a classic California sea village with an ice cream parlor, vintage carousel, arcade, stylish boutiques and legendary fish and chips at Andria’s.

Sports Teams and Tournaments

Temperate climate and wide open spaces make Ventura County West a no-brainer for sports groups. The region is known for having some of the best soccer fields in California and happens to be a major stage of the Ojai Valley Tennis Tournament, which attracts 1,400 players and families to town every April.

Residence Inn by Marriott at Oxnard River Ridge, the preferred venue for sports teams like the Dallas Cowboys, sits atop an expansive golf course and offers two full-sized NFL fields, two pools, three jacuzzis, four lighted tennis courts and an outdoor patio with a fire pit. In addition to suite accommodations with full kitchens, guests at this hotel enjoy a complimentary breakfast and evening social hour with snacks and beverages.

The Channel Islands National Park, accessible through Island Packers in Oxnard, is a primitive playground for adventure lovers and athletic types who need a break from their normal routine. Activities include island hiking, backpacking, kayaking, snorkeling, boating and fishing; those seeking leisure can visit the island for bird or whale watching. Another great destination in the region is Port Hueneme Beach Park, which features 50 acres of white sand beaches with volleyball nets, picnic areas and barbecue pits.

Corporate Meetings and Retreats

For corporate meetings and events, Ventura County West is an undiscovered oasis. Embassy Suites Mandalay Beach is a luxurious venue strewn across eight and a half acres of beachfront property in Oxnard. With over 16,000 square feet of event space and lush, tropical landscaping, the hotel provides a transformative escape. The Crowne Plaza Ventura Beach has 19,000 square feet of event space directly on the shores of the Santa Barbara Channel. The hotel’s stylish terrace, complete with cozy seating, romantic lighting and an oversized bonfire pit makes for unforgettable events.

Many of Ventura County West’s hotels are within walking distance of breathtaking beaches and bustling downtown areas. For those that are not, the free Downtown Ventura Harbor Trolley transports guests from local beach hotels to all of the city’s popular attractions. Oxnard also has a free shuttle that takes hotel guests to local destinations of their choosing. Old Town Camarillo is a great spot for corporate groups to loosen their ties and savor farm fresh cuisine, craft beer, local wines and live music.

International groups will appreciate the Naval Base Ventura County in Oxnard, which is the only base on the West Coast experimenting with drone technologies. Port Hueneme, the only deep water harbor between Los Angeles and San Francisco, is also popular among business groups.

For more information about places to go, things to do, and ideas about hosting a meeting or event in Ventura County West, go to www.VenturaCountyWest.com/meetings.
HARD DATA THAT PROVES BOWLING WITH US MAKES THE BEST HOLIDAY OFFICE PARTY

- Fist Pumping: 14%
- Celebration Dances: 27%
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- Impromptu Toasts: 11%
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Although they won’t know who will be numbers are drawn for opening order. and for however many gifts are brought, everyone attending a party brings a gift different names! The main idea here is that given, the identity of their “Santa” is kept buys for everyone in the group, now each person just buys for one other person. Be sure no one draws their own name, though!

Secret Santa - Building on the drawing names gift exchange idea, Secret Santa keeps it a secret who each person will buy for! Many times even after the gift is given, the identity of their “Santa” is kept secret from the gift recipient.

White Elephant - This is a fun holiday gift exchange idea that goes by many different names! The main idea here is that everyone attending a party brings a gift and for however many gifts are brought, numbers are drawn for opening order. Although they won’t know who will be opening the gift, it doesn’t have to be generic or gender neutral because others will have the opportunity to take it home! The first person to choose a gift opens it. The second person to choose a gift opens theirs and then has the option to keep their own gift or swap it for the first person’s gift. Every new person who opens a gift has the option to keep their own or swap for any other. After the last person picks and opts to swap or not swap, the first person is given the opportunity to swap the gift they ended up with. It’s great fun and a very popular gift exchange idea!

Grab Bag - In this gift exchange, every party attendee brings an unusually shaped gift and secretly sneaks it into a grab bag so no one sees the gifts that are being added. When it comes time for gifts, the bag is brought out with all the mysterious gifts inside. Each person then reaches in and feels around for a gift that they might like to take home!

Auction (live or silent) - Going once! Going twice! Auctions can be great fun and a terrific way to exchange gifts! Each party attendee brings a few gifts (or the hostess can provide all the gifts if she likes) and they are put on display and up for auction. Each party guest is given a certain number (usually 100) of points with which to bid. Once all of their points have been used to “purchase” auction items, guests can no longer bid on items. A live auction is great fun for a lively party, but if you prefer a more subdued auction, guests can write their bids on paper for each gift.

Best Guess - If your party attendees are big fans of guessing games like Charades or Pictionary, you’re bound to love this fun gift exchange idea! Each person brings a gift or two. When it comes time for gift giving, each is given a turn to hold up their wrapped gift and the group guesses what might be inside. You can give clues or use charades or sketches to help them along (especially if it’s a particularly obscure gift to guess), and the first person to guess just what the gift is gets to keep it!

Charitable Giving - For those organizations passionate about philanthropy, this is a great option. Decide on a charity to donate the money you would ordinarily spend on gift giving to help others. You can all pool your money into a single charity or let each would-be gift recipient choose their own charity.

Recycled Gifts - No, we don’t want you to go rummaging through your cardboards and plastics looking for gifts. This idea is about re-gifting! Rather than holding your holiday party before the holidays, opt for a delayed party in the New Year. The only gift requirement is that you bring a gift you have already received! We all get presents around the holidays that we don’t necessarily need or want. And as they say, one man’s trash is another man’s treasure. Recycle those unwanted gifts for a creative gift exchange idea that won’t cost anyone a single dime!

Homemade Gifts - This is a great frugal gift exchange idea that can be just as exciting as any of the others. Have a holiday party where the only gifts exchanged are homemade gifts. From homemade cookies to original paintings to homemade ornaments, quilts, knit hats and more, discover how talented your coworkers really are!

Tina Dixon is a freelance writer.
“The tools in the Business Plan Center are golden for anyone who’s looking to grow their business.”

Carolyn Miye
Oodles 4 Kids, est. 2012
Portland, Oregon

Our complimentary Business Plan Tool can help you focus on the things that will make your business thrive.

Like most small business owners, Carolyn Miye* was so busy running her business that she found it hard to organize ideas for her company’s future into a business plan. Using the Business Plan Tool from Wells Fargo, she gained valuable insight to help her focus on what to do next. It’s just one of the complimentary resources in the new Business Plan Center. To learn more, visit WellsFargoWorks.com.

*Wells Fargo rewarded Carolyn Miye $10,000 to help with her marketing plans.
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HOLIDAY VENUES

Each year, companies across the country search for the perfect setting to host their holiday party and the perfect activity to engage, entertain, and reward their employees. So how can you make sure that your party stands out from the rest? One way is to treat your office to the team-inspired fun of bowling.

Bowling? Really? Definitely. You may remember bowling from your childhood friend’s 10th birthday party, but today more and more companies are choosing to bring their teams to enjoy blacklight bowling and gourmet dining in impressively designed Bowlmor Lanes and Bowlero venues. Here Bowlmor AMF, the owner of LA’s ever-popular Bowlmor Lanes and Bowlero bowling lounges, tells you why bowling makes every office holiday party more fun.

Top 5 Reasons to Go Bowling for Your Office Holiday Party

1) It’s Interactive. When you’re bowling, everyone is engaged—and no one is feeling like that lonely guy or girl in the corner (office holiday parties can be notorious for that). Bowlmor and Bowlero take this engagement to the next level—incorporating dynamic video walls, up-tempo music, and laneside service to make the party experience undeniably immersive.

2) It’s Team-Oriented. Teambuilding is in bowling’s DNA; it’s built into the experience. When you bowl, your informal teams become a kind of mini-community for your party (and sometimes, well after the party). The takeaway: office camaraderie comes standard with every laneside holiday event.

3) It’s Upscale Without Being Stale. From the Baby Boomer boss to the Gen-X manager to the Millennial up-and-comer, everyone can get in on the fun—whether you want to enjoy a drink on plush laneside couches, roll like a rebel on the lanes, or hit up the arcade and unleash your inner child.

4) It Covers the Office Age-Gap. From the Baby Boomer boss to the Gen-X manager to the Millennial up-and-comer, everyone can get in on the fun—whether you want to enjoy a drink on plush laneside couches, roll like a rebel on the lanes, or hit up the arcade and unleash your inner child.

5) It’s Not the Conference Room. Taking your team out of the office shows that your party took some thought—and that it wasn’t just an afterthought. (What? People don’t like eating chips and salsa on the same table they prepare reports and hold meetings…?) When you leave the office and hit the lanes, you have officially entered party-mode.

5 Tips to Book Like a Pro

1) Plan Early. Really Early. Area venues fill up quickly (our locations in Pasadena, Santa Monica, and Mar Vista can all attest to this). And it’s never a fun experience when you discover that your ideal venue has a months-long waiting list.

2) Plan Early. Yes, we mentioned it twice. It’s that important. Plus, you can usually get exclusive extras and special deals on your holiday party the earlier in the season you decide to book. (Take advantage of Bowlmor and Bowlero’s special early booking offer now—book before 10/31 and get free $20 gift cards for all of your guests. Go to Bowlmor.com/holiday or...)

The Office Holiday Party: The Top 5 Reasons to Go Bowling and the Top 5 Tips When Booking

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Planning for that Big Holiday Office Party

By SYDNEY CHAFEE

I
f you have decided to have a holiday office party this year, you have to do some planning. And depending on the size of your business, you may have to start planning well in advance.

You can make your holiday office party one to remember — provided you know what is involved in planning the perfect office party.

Here are some tips for your holiday party planning:

Get Everyone Involved
Discuss the party with your employees and colleagues. Solicit company holiday party ideas from everyone who is interested. This helps in forging a sense of unity and avoiding resentment.

Then, consider forming a committee to organize the party. If your business is smaller, then everyone should be involved.

Holiday Party Themes
Decide on a theme for your holiday party. Having a holiday party theme helps in organizing a more entertaining party. Try to think a bit differently; go for something new and exciting. Consider taking the company to play a round of golf, visit historical places, or taking a dinner cruise or going to a fine dining restaurant.

The idea here is to opt for a holiday party theme that takes you away from the mundane office environment.

Pick a Suitable Date
Decide on a date that is good for everyone. Christmas Eve usually isn’t very good, as most people want to take off early to be with their families. Make sure you inform everybody well in advance, and that your holiday office party date does not clash with a holiday or fall on the date of an important company event.

Ask your employees if they think it should be held on a weekday or the weekend. This will ensure that everyone will be able to participate.

Choose the Right Location
The idea behind a holiday office party is for everyone to unwind and enjoy themselves. Ask all your employees to pitch in and help plan the location, make sure that it is in a location that is convenient for everyone.

Food and Beverage Considerations
Naturally, the people in your office are interested in food and drinks. Ask your employees if they think it is a good idea. It is always better to serve non-alcoholic drinks so that those who don’t get out of hand. You can ask your employees about their dietary restrictions and preferences. Make sure that you arrange to have the right amount of food and drinks available.

Decorations to Create That Party Feeling
While doing your holiday party planning, pay special attention to the decorations. They should match the season and the holiday.

Games and Activities to Enjoy
Be sure to plan games and activities that help break the ice. For example, you can organize games and have singing competitions. You can have prizes for the best-dressed person. Play lively music in the background. Try to hire a DJ if your budget permits.

Remember, this is your opportunity to show your employees your appreciation.

Cool Gifts and Prizes
At the party, give gifts and prizes that are cool, fun and useful. They can be the latest electronic gadgets, party favors or gift certificates.

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Sydney Chafee is a freelance writer.
If you’re thinking about canceling the annual company holiday party, don’t! Get creative instead. It’s been a tough year with the country experiencing layoffs, skyrocketing unemployment and budget cuts, and your employees are probably long overdue for a morale boost.

Planning a successful party takes time, but doesn’t have to break the bank.

• **Venue:** If possible, get out of the office. An afternoon affair for 2-3 hours at a local restaurant or hotel will be less expensive than an evening event on a premium holiday date.

• **Date:** Have a few dates and times to run by the boss to make sure all important people are available for the party. Finding out the boss is in Tahiti on your party date would be a disaster.

• **Time:** Start your party after lunch and end before dinner to eliminate the need to serve a full meal.

• **Invitations:** Once you have your date, time and venue, order fabulous invitations. An awesome holiday party invitation sets the tone for the occasion and lets employees know what you have planned. Don’t send out a boring memo or uninteresting letter sheet of “who, what, where and when” stats. There are affordable custom printed invitations available that will get party goers excited about your event.

• **Food:** Choosing an array of appetizers and sandwiches will lower your food costs, eliminate chefs and limit the number of attendants needed.

• **Desserts:** A dessert station with mini bite-size portions cuts costs as most guests take a few bites and leave the rest.

• **Drinks:** With an afternoon party, you could eliminate alcoholic beverages and potential liabilities too. Choosing to serve only wine and beer might be another alternative and skips the expense of an open bar that might be expected at an evening party.

• **Entertainment:** You can hire a DJ instead of live entertainment or maybe a magician or a fortune teller (only good news) would be fun for your crowd.

• **Appreciation:** No matter what type of party you decide on, be sure to emphasize that you value your employees. Give them a boost to bring in a wonderful new year, your company’s morale might depend on it.

Information for this article was provided by AnnouncingIt.com. More information can be found online at http://www.announcingit.com.