Holiday Planning Guide

How to Organize the Ultimate Holiday Party

By SYDNEY CHAFFEE

If 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. Choose a location that is festive, comfortable and beautiful. When you choose 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 have different dietary requirements. Some may be vegetarian while others may be on a diabetic diet.

Having a menu that caters to everyone is a good idea. It is always better to serve non-alcoholic drinks so that things 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.

Ask all your employees to pitch in when it comes to gift ideas – that way, everyone will feel that they have an opportunity to contribute.

Organizing a great holiday office party can be fun for everyone. Follow the tips above and make your party one to remember!

Sydney Chafee is a freelance writer.
Nine Gift Exchange Ideas For Your Holiday Party

By TINA DIXON

Whether it’s to save money, boost the fun or create a new tradition, many corporate event planners are looking for new ways to engage in gift giving for those forthcoming holiday parties.

Discover nine great holiday gift exchange ideas below:

**DRAWING NAMES** - To cut down on having to buy for many different people, a group of employees can draw names out of a hat! Instead of each person having to buy 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 giving order. Although they won’t know who opens a gift 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 very popular gift exchange idea!

**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 cardboard boxes looking for old Christmas cards. 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.

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Ventura County Coast is a string of four cities – Camarillo, Oxnard, Ventura and Port Hueneme – located off Highway 101 between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. You can’t go wrong planning a visit here, along with its year-round pleasant weather, Ventura County Coast is known for 22 miles of beaches, historic downtowns, outdoor activities, award-winning wineries and farm-to-table restaurants. This means professional development is paired with a relaxing atmosphere and unforgettable team building.

The meeting rooms in Ventura County Coast accommodate groups from 10 to 1,000. Whether you’re looking for a beachfront location or a full-service hotel conference center, you’ll find accommodations that match your team’s needs. Plus, lodging is affordable and welcoming to large groups.

To keep inspiration sustained, Ventura County Coast has a culinary experience all its own, created from an abundance of fresh and local ingredients. The region’s artisan chefs, locally grown produce, fresh seafood and rich farming heritage make the Ventura County Coast dining scene uniquely delicious. Be sure to try a local craft brew at the end of a hard day’s work.

Complete the experience with leisure activities from the four cities that make up Ventura County Coast.

CAMARILLO
Shop, golf and relax in Camarillo. Here, you’ll find the latest fashions at one of the nation’s best Premium Outlets, with brands like Banana Republic, Coach, Michael Kors, Polo Ralph Lauren, Tory Burch, Tommy Hilfiger and much more. Minutes down the road, visitors can savor the sights and smells of a delicious agricultural tradition and rediscover how sweet and inspiring fresh-picked fruits can taste.

For golf enthusiasts, Camarillo is a dream destination with incredible year-round weather and two pristine public golf courses. Those who simply want to relax and rejuvenate can enjoy indulgent spas, captivating art galleries and an enchanting old town brimming with history.

VENTURA
Ventura synthesizes surf culture, historic buildings and a bustling downtown scene to embody a true California getaway. Visitors to Ventura enjoy outdoor adventures, a lively arts scene and an oceanside proximity that makes it a chef’s paradise.

Get the whole team together for beach activities like surfing, kiteboarding or kayaking. Water enthusiasts will enjoy winter swells and summer whitecaps at Ventura’s beaches, but there are plenty of options for those who like to enjoy the surf culture from a distance. The oceanfront Ventura Promenade is a festive place to take a stroll or ride bikes.

OXNARD
In the casual seaside city of Oxnard, you’ll find an active boating harbor, the nation’s largest kosher winery, the world-class Mullin Automotive Museum and a historic downtown bursting with multicultural flavors and architectural treasures. You’ll quickly discover why a tasty array of authentic Mexican cuisine and new eateries are putting Oxnard on the culinary map. In downtown Oxnard, Heritage Square is an amazing collection of magnificently restored homes and lushly landscaped gardens.

Oxnard’s harbor provides access to Channel Islands National Park, “America’s Galapagos.” The natural and cultural resources of its five different islands have been steadfastly preserved here and although it’s just a short boat trip away, these islands will have you feeling like you’re in a different world.

PORT HUENEME
Stroll along sandy beaches in Port Hueneme, a seaside community located between Oxnard and Ventura. Its original Chumash Indian name, Wenemu, means “resting place.” And it doesn’t take much time at the fifty-acre Hueneme Beach Park to discover that this city is a place for refreshing the mind and soul.

Port Hueneme Beach Park’s expansive sandy beaches, south-facing surf, wavy volleyball courts, and walkable beachside promenade promise satisfaction for every kind of beachgoer – sunbathers and surfers alike.

SCHEDULE YOUR NEXT MEETING OR CONFERENCE
Being your team to a place of inspiration. At venturacountycoast.com/meetings, you’ll find a guide to help you pick the perfect space for your needs and budget. From productive brainstorming to breathtaking views, Ventura County Coast has what you need. It’s time for your team to venture out.

For more information, please visit venturacountycoast.com/meetings.