

Primary Story Source: Lynda Kavanagh

Don't want to be remembered as that guy or gal at the annual office Christmas or holiday party? If memories of past parties leave you cringing, try changing the outcome of this year's festivities by practicing some simple office party etiquette.



Tips to consider when getting together with co-workers this holiday

Adam Eisenbarth
For the Sun Times

Before heading out the door for your staff Christmas party, you may want to consider the implications the event could have. While many see a Christmas staff party as a chance to let loose and enjoy some time with your co-workers, it's also a time to make a positive impact on your employers. If you're not careful, it can also be a time to damage your reputation.

Now, although it is important to have proper etiquette, it's also important to enjoy yourself. The challenge then becomes balancing fun and maintaining that etiquette.

Lynda Kavanagh, a marketing and consumer behaviour expert, says limiting alcohol consumption is one of the most important and basic etiquette practices.

"What it really comes down to is how long of time are you going to be spending at this party and knowing your alcohol intake and your body size. It's all about making a positive impression."

Another issue that Kavanagh sees popping up is underdressing and overdressing. Terms such as "business casual" seem to have several definitions and can create quite a headache.

"What I suggest is to make a phone call to the organizer and get their definition of business casual so that you have an idea of what to expect. You don't want to stand out negatively, so you don't want to overdress and you don't want to under-dress."

The stress of preparing for the big night may leave you to consider skipping it all together, especially if you don't enjoy the company of your co-workers.

Kavanagh says that can be a damaging idea as well.

"You have to show up. You don't have to be friends with your co-workers but 'tis the season.

You've got to be there and be polite. It doesn't mean you have

to stay there all night. Have your dinner, stay about 15 minutes after and excuse yourself from the party and then you can't be criticized for not showing or making an effort."

Another problem can come about when you're sitting at the table.

"I see the biggest confusion with dinner utensils. We live in such a fast-paced world now that families are rarely able to sit down to dinner and we're seeing a lot of youth don't understand proper eating etiquette."

Different glasses can cause issues as well.

"One is for water, one is for white wine and the other is for red wine. The largest one is always for water. The white wine is what we would generally just call a normal wine glass and the red wine glass has a much bigger bowl to it. There can also be a champagne glass and that one is really thin."

For employers, it may be a good idea to get their employees up to date on proper holiday etiquette, something Kavanagh often suggests around this time of year.

"Usually the response is 'We all know our etiquette.' I'll ask them one question like, 'Do you pass the salt first or pepper, or both' and then they start to realize that maybe they should go through it for everyone."

Kavanagh believes that etiquette is starting to make a comeback after things became a little too slack.

"It was getting to a point where businesses were getting so casual that people were starting to become uncomfortable so I am seeing business etiquette starting to come back again."

Finally, once you've enjoyed your staff part it's a good idea to treat other events with the same type of etiquette.

"Someone's always watching. You may be at a wedding, dancing on the tables and you go for a job interview and that person was there. It's always better to have that etiquette even if it's not a business function."

Gift-giving etiquette

Metrolife News Service

giving a holiday gift to a co-worker or a wonderful way to show appreciation and share the holiday spirit. The challenge comes in choosing the right gift for the right people. Before heading out with your office gift list in hand, remember that the gift should be for choosing gifts for colleagues and not from those you use with family.

your first holiday season with the check to see if there is a policy or regarding gift giving. The larger

the company, the more likely it is that a formal policy exists. If the office has its own traditions, such as a gift exchange or "Secret Santa," find out what they are, follow the rules and give within the limitations.

When there is no specific policy or custom, keep in mind that the gifts you choose make a statement about the kind of person you are. Keep it equitable and simple. For example, giving expensive gifts to bosses or particular colleagues might lead to bad feelings that remain long after the holidays are gone. If you have a close, personal relationship with a coworker and want to express your holiday cheer, find a time and place away from the office to exchange gifts. If it's personal, keep it

personal.

It's also important to remember that others may express their holiday spirit in a different way for religious or personal reasons. This doesn't mean that gift giving is out of the question, but that it's wise to be mindful of others' beliefs and feelings. The answer could be something as simple as using Hanukkah wrapping paper or holiday-neutral gift packaging.

Here are some basic guidelines to follow when shopping for the folks at work.

- Unless you know the recipient's interests or hobbies, keep gifts as general and tasteful as possible.

- Avoid gifts that are too personal or "gag" gifts that people might find offensive.

- Be careful about food gifts because of dietary restrictions or possible food allergies.

- Don't even think about spending more than the stated limit.

- Avoid gift cards. They can give the impression that you didn't make an effort.

- Be sure your gifts are on time and are nicely wrapped. This shows that you did make an effort.

- Above all, remember what the holidays are about and especially what they are not about. Office gift giving is not about furthering your career or impressing the boss. It is a simple act of appreciation and generosity that will be remembered for many holiday seasons to come.