# Did you Invite Your Virtual Employees To The Party?

Did you now that Virtual parties were a 'thing'? Well they are. Just as the recruiting industry can host a virtual job fair, virtual parties can be combined with your in-office party or if all of your employees are virtual you can throw a fully virtual affair.

**Consider these 6 Steps to create a virtually inclusive office party**

1. **Platform:** Select the Platform you are going to use to host the virtual party. There are a variety of options you can use for little or no cost depending on the number of participants and desired functionality. SKYPE, Google Hangouts, Facebook and other similar services could meet your needs for a smaller group of virtual workers for no cost. Your organization may already have access to larger platforms such as WebEx or GoToMeeting where you can interact with many people at once . There is even a website called Virtual celebration that offers everything you need in an interactive platform.

2. **Technology**: Identify the technology you are going to use to interface with the virtual guests. A laptop may be portable but in terms of interaction with in-house partygoers it probably wont cut it on its own. While you may use the laptop to facilitate the interaction you will want to use a larger screen to display the action. You will also need a web camera and a mic so that the party can be displayed but ensure that the camera is not recording and you will need an actual set of speakers (do not rely on the built in speakers).

3. **Planning:** Your party planning will now need to include activities that can engage your virtual guests. If you are holding a seasonal holiday and you are planning on making arts and crafts projects such as a tree ornament they you should send the matching items to your virtual guests ahead of time, in a package marked do not open until the party. Similarly, identify some of the party decorations and send a mini package to your virtual

employees in the same box. You do not have to send enough to decorate the virtual employees entire office, just something that can act as a symbol of their inclusion.Do not forget the food — if the event is potluck then you can identify the types of foods employees have agreed to bring ahead of time and if possible send a small token platter to the virtual employees or send them a list and suggest that they select a few for themselves so they are sharing the same experience.

4. **Timing:** There are two key timing issues to consider. First is the time of the event. If you have employees from all around the country or globe in different time zones ideally you want a party that is held as a convenient time of day for all employees. Second consider duration. The odds are virtual employees will not want to hang around for 2 or 3 hours. Consider a virtual party as 2 hours and design the most Internet friendly activities to occur in this time span.

5. **Host:** Selecting the right host or hosts who have as a responsibility liaising with the virtual guests is of primary importance. You can rotate the hosts assigning each a designated interval of time, perhaps 15 minutes, to facilitate the virtual guests engagement. These hosts can ensure that everyone drops in on the virtual guests and that the virtual employees are not overlooked in the conversations.

6. **Get Portable:** The BYOD, 'Bring Your Own Device' trend can help make your virtual party more engaging for all. Your employees can take turns bringing a virtual colleague into the conversation by streaming them in and around on a personal device such as a tablet or phone. As the host you can set up laptops or tables in a few strategic locations and let your virtual employees circulate by providing them with other 'numbers' to call into.

Do not forget to send an invitation to your virtual employees letting them know that they are welcome to come to the office or if they choose you will send a small part of the party to them.