Halloween in the Workplace



It’s time for ghosts and goblins, tricks and treats—and perhaps a little fun at work. Here are tips for celebrating Halloween in the workplace, as well as what to avoid.

Top 5 Dos:

1. **Dress up**. If donning a Halloween costume is encouraged, show team spirit and get into character. Complement your personality, while also respecting the company’s culture and human resource policies. Stumped as to what to wear? Consider a classic. According to a Halloween survey conducted by career community Glassdoor, two out of five employees (42 percent) say they would likely dress as a ghost, witch or pirate, while 20 percent would dress like their favorite movie character, such as Katniss from “*The Hunger Games,*” for work. The remaining results show office-themed costumes (e.g., pink slip, the boss, a three-hole punch) and pop-culture-premised costumes (e.g., a pregnant Snooki) as go-to choices.
2. **Remove your boss’s mask**. Do you lead a team, or an entire department? If so, nearly one in three of your employees (29 percent) will want you to participate in dressing up, according to Glassdoor’s survey. Instead of sitting stoically in your office as the pirates walk the plank, the ghosts get spooky, and the witches cast their spells, replace your boss’s mask with something a little more whimsical; enjoy the day by playing along with the team. You might just earn a few points for being down-to-earth and showing humility with this behavior.
3. **Get cookin.’** While theatrical attire sounds whimsical and fun, food actually trumps costumes among what employees want most at work this Halloween. According to the survey, 70 percent of employees say they would most enjoy a Halloween breakfast/lunch or free candy/treats at work. Whether you’re a frontline receptionist or someone steeped in analysis in a secluded back office, you may consider fetching a bag of Snickers bars or baking a couple dozen spider cupcakes to share with your co-workers. Or, for the ambitious, rally your teammates and cook up a Halloween breakfast or lunch event to shed a culinary bright light on an otherwise typical or bland workday.
4. **Ask early**. If you hope to exit early on Halloween to take your little ones trick-or-treating, ask permission ahead of time. Offer your boss the courtesy of advance notice, indicating you would like to be home before dark so you can attend to the holiday ritual. Offer to arrive early or stay late that day or a different day to make it a win-win request.

5. **Enjoy the day**. Even if your Halloween work schedule is slammed with deadlines and customer commitments, take five minutes to share in some candy corn and conversation that revolves around the spirit of the day. While your job is your No. 1 priority, it's also OK to enjoy the holiday. You might even discover the added fun is the energy boost you need to get through that tough project.

Top 5 Don'ts:

1. **Dress inappropriately**. A sexy pirate wench may sound like the costume du jour; however, the next day, you may find yourself regretting the low-cut blouse and short-short skirt that left you feeling exposed and made your colleagues blush. At the same time, if you are uncertain of your company's costume parameters, check with human resources. They may have guidelines to help tame your creative side to fit within the proper confines of a business climate. Glassdoor's survey shows that most employees (51 percent) say that if a co-worker wears an inappropriate Halloween costume to work, the best thing HR can do is to ask them to change. So remember: fun but appropriate.
2. **Assume**. It's a slippery slope to assume you will be checking out early to take the kiddos trick-or-treating, leaving your childless colleagues to hold the fort. As mentioned, you should ask your boss's permission in advance. In addition, consider extending courtesies and added communications to your kid-free teammates early in the week to ensure they don't feel like they're left holding the work bag while you gallivant into the holiday evening with a trick-or-treat bag.
3. **Bring games to work**. According to Glassdoor's survey, only 6 percent of employees would enjoy bobbing for apples or other games. Since most employees just aren't into this, forget it. Remember, food trumps Halloween-themed games when it comes to celebrating at work.
4. **Ditch your work**. While it's easy to get swept up in the festivities of the holiday, remember that you're being paid to be there and don't shirk your duties. Customer expecting a deliverable? Get it done. Client calling with an urgent inquiry? Answering the phone with a mouthful of candy and a casual attitude may offend. Have fun, but maintain your professional decorum.
5. **Be a Scrooge**. While we often associate Scrooge with winter holidays, you could also be pegged as one this Halloween if you walk around with a resentful attitude and a bah-humbug spirit while your colleagues whoop it up. Although it isn't necessary to be someone you're not, it is probably in your best interest to join in some of the festivities versus taking an aloof or dismissive approach to lighthearted holiday fun. Who knows? You may even enjoy yourself.