

Holiday Dos & Don'ts



By Paula Santonocito

'Tis another holiday season, which means another round of challenges for HR. But before you say, "bah, humbug," take a look at our Holiday Dos & Don'ts.

Created especially with you in mind, these tips might actually make your holidays—and the holidays of your workforce—a little happier.

Do:

Try to be flexible when it comes to time off during the holiday season. Yes, employees should have saved their vacation time. And yes, maybe seniority should prevail when it comes to the days off everyone wants. However, even small gestures, like allowing employees to leave early the day before a holiday or come in a little late the day after will make a difference to your workforce and have a positive impact on your organization's employer brand.

Plan a company-wide celebration or allow departments to hold parties. The holidays are all about celebrating, and people like a party. From a work standpoint, a holiday party provides a perfect opportunity for networking and team building; in other words, it's good for morale.

Think about whether to hold a party during the workday or after hours. Sure, an evening gala sounds like great fun. But does it work for your workforce? If most of your employees have young children, childcare arrangements may be an issue—and an expense. Keep in mind too that it's a busy time of year and people may have other social plans.

Consider whether to invite spouses and significant others to a holiday event. Workplace gatherings that include partners place added stress on your single employees. Most people don't want to bring just anyone to a party that includes their boss and coworkers. Employees with partners may also feel uncomfortable mixing the personal and professional. It has the potential to create what Seinfeld's George Costanza describes as worlds colliding.

Weigh the decision to serve alcohol at work-related events. A drink or two rarely poses a problem. Unfortunately, there seems to be at least one in every crowd who uses any party as a chance to partay.

Encourage managers to avoid any obligatory gift exchange, even grab bags. Not

everyone has the financial resources to participate. Twenty dollars for a grab bag gift might seem like no big deal, but it could be someone's lunch money. Or, it might go toward a gift for an employee's family member.

Don't:

Forget to be inclusive when celebrating. Your workforce embraces a variety of beliefs and customs. Attention to this diversity should extend to workplace holiday celebrations.

Make after-hour party attendance mandatory. Employees have lives outside of work, and those lives are often complicated. Childcare, eldercare, partners working different shifts—these and other situations impact employees' ability to socialize.

Allow one department to outshine another when it comes to partying. A dull little get-together in the marketing department, while people next door in accounting are whooping it up will create resentment. Establishing and sharing guidelines can prevent this from happening.

Lose sight of your HR responsibilities. As the people department, HR wears various hats; and while event-planner/keeper of internal merriment may not be your fave, it's a tough job and somebody's got to do it.

Forget to enjoy yourself. The holidays are a time for human resources to show its human side. So, by all means, smile, laugh, and participate in the festivities. 'Tis the season.