

Office Parties Can Get You Drunk On Less Alcohol!



✘ Many articles are written at this time of year about the liability of organizations who host office parties where alcohol may be served. Advice is given to move office parties off site to licensed establishments so as to pass on the responsibility. While this is sound advice, it can be costly and not always convenient. Hosting a party in your own office or at someone's home is a fine idea. If you want to serve alcohol, however, you must first have a plan.

Alcohol at Office Parties Has a Disinhibiting Effect

According to research from Dr. Suzanne Higgs from the University of Birmingham, there is a reason why drinking at work related parties impacts you more than does drinking out at the bar with friends or colleagues. Her research indicates that drinking in an 'unknown' circumstance leads people to be more disinhibited. When out drinking with your usual friends at your usual place, your brain gets used to the setting and environment, and, over time, the alcohol has less disinhibiting impact. However, when you are placed in an environment where you are not accustomed to pairing alcohol with the setting and people, such as an office party, your brain is more easily impacted. That's why many people can tolerate less alcohol during office parties compared to drinking at their usual haunts.

In general, serving alcohol need not be part of the celebration, but if you choose to serve it, keep these considerations in mind:

Options for minimizing alcohol's appearance at your office parties

1. **Host your party during the day.** Close the office for a couple of hours over the lunch break. Most people are less inclined to drink excessively during the day especially if they have to go back to work.
2. **Bring in a trained bartender.** This is an expense, but less so than going to a licensed establishment.
3. **Control the flow of alcohol.** Allow each employee one ticket per hour – with their name on it so there can be no trading. They hand over the ticket to get the drink and the limit is enforced (and hopefully your liability minimized)
4. **Serve great food just as the guests arrive and long before you open the bubbly.** If

you are catering or serving a meal later in the event, make sure you have healthy snacks and include proteins, not only sugary cakes and cookies.

5. **Have fun with 'Mocktails'** (non-alcoholic drinks). Hold a contest to see who can mix the most interesting and tasty mocktail.

6. **Plan activities to keep people busy.** Music, food and alcohol create an atmosphere of anticipation that can reduce inhibitions. Focused activities keep people busy. Identify 2-3 activities including making decorations, singing, showing photos, signing card or packing hampers for the food bank.

7. **Pay attention.** With so much going on at the party, it can be difficult to keep your eye on alcohol consumption and related behaviours. It is important that others are on the lookout; designate a few individuals to have assigned times when they are tasked with checking in on everyone. Have a list of everyone who is attending and check off that they have been 'visited' by a 'party host' at different intervals.

8. **Friendly reminders.** Remind your employees before and during the party that they are still under house rules and will be held accountable for their actions at the party.

9. **Count.** Count the number of people planning to attend and buy only enough alcohol to serve one glass to each person. Not every one will drink and if you serve plenty mocktails most people will not notice

10. **Drink Together.** Plan on having only one toast; a special toast to the company or to the season or some other special event. Open the wine or bubbly, pour, toast and put the alcohol away.

A final important tip: If you know that the boss or a senior executive is an excessive drinker consider very strongly not serving alcohol. The implications of the bosses actions and example can have a long lasting legacy.

You and your guests will enjoy your holiday office party much more if you have taken careful steps to ensure it is a safe and well-managed event.

Source:

[Research Explains Why People Get Drunk at the Office Party](#)