Ten Ways To Hold A Company Party – Without Getting Sued

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Mike Mitchell was quoted in *Biz New Orleans* on December 18, 2014. The article "Ten Ways To Hold A Company Party – Without Getting Sued" provided tips on how to avoid getting sued after hosting a company party.

Mike said there is always risk involved in holding any company-sponsored function and serving alcohol only compounds the problems.

"If possible, don't serve alcohol," Mike said. "This is easier to do if you simply have a catered lunch at the company's offices."

He said, according to one study, 36% of employers reported behavioral problems at their most recent company party. These problems involved everything from excessive drinking to off-color jokes to sexual advances to fist fights. As a result, more and more employers now hold alcohol-free parties.

Mike also advised to invite spouses and significant others so there will be someone there to help keep an eye on employees and, if necessary, get them home safely.

"Always serve food if you serve alcohol, and always have plenty of non-alcoholic beverages available," Mike said.

Other options to consider is to serve only beer and wine and opt to not provide an "open bar" where employees can drink as much as they want. Instead, Mitchell said, have a cash bar or use a ticket system to limit the number of drinks. Closing the bar at least an hour before you plan to end the party and offering coffee and soft drinks for the rest of the event is another way to manage drinking.

"Let your managers know that they will be considered 'on duty' at the party," Mike said. "They should be instructed to keep an eye on their subordinates to ensure they do not drink too much. Instruct managers that they are not to attend any 'post party' parties."

Mike recommended reminding employees that the company's normal workplace standards of conduct will be in force at the party, and misconduct at or after the party can result in disciplinary action.

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"Hire professional bartenders," Mike said. "Don't use supervisors. And instruct them to report anyone who they think has had too much. Ensure that bartenders require positive identification from guests who do not appear to be substantially over 21."

Mike said providing a no-cost taxi service or hotel rooms for intoxicated employees is another way to mitigate potential damage.

"Never, never, hang mistletoe," Mike said. "Consumption of alcohol lowers inhibitions, and impairs judgment. This can result in employees saying and doing things that they would not ordinarily do."

To read the full article please visit, *Biz New Orleans*.

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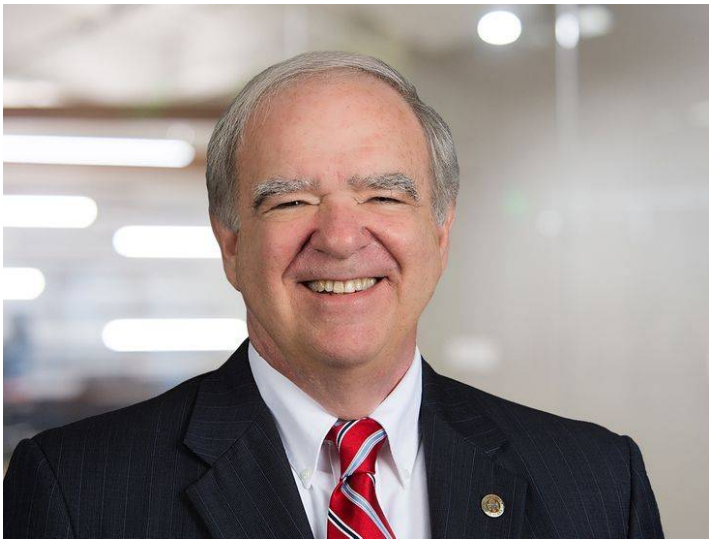

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