



Avoiding Unhappy Office Holiday Parties

Publication

12.08.11

Shayna Balch's article "Avoiding Unhappy Office Holiday Parties" was featured in *AZBusiness Magazine* on December 8, 2011.

There's always going to be risks when hosting parties where alcohol is involved. In fact, according to a recent study conducted on employers, 36 percent of holiday party-goers behave poorly at their company parties. A lot of companies have chosen to go as far as to nix alcohol from holiday parties all together.

Shayna provides the following recommendations on how employers and employees can avoid the unhappiest of holiday parties and lawsuit-filled New Years:

- If you choose to opt out of serving alcohol, celebrate by hosting a catered lunch at the office.
- Be sure to allow each person a guest, whether it be a spouse or significant other. These guests could serve as "adult babysitters" to make sure the employee does not act out of line.
- Have food and non-alcoholic drinks readily available. Food helps to absorb alcohol and the non-alcoholic drinks will serve as an alternative for those who would rather stay sober.
- Consider serving just wine, beer and/or non-alcoholic drinks. These are not as harsh as hard liquor and will all pair nicely with dinner parties as well.
- Just say "no" to open bars! Unlimited booze rarely brings about any good decisions, so instead opt for a cash bar or ticket system.
- As an employer, it is important to remind your managers that they are there to assist you in making sure the party runs smoothly. They can serve as extra eyes to make sure the subordinates are behaving accordingly.
- As we all know, inhibitions are lowered after alcohol has been consumed. People say and do things they typically would not have had they not been drinking. In cases where alcohol will be served at the party, remind employees that work conduct is still in force and disciplinary actions will be taken if employees are to act unruly.
- Don't hire within! Hire a professional bartender. They have the proper training when it comes to identifying people who are and aren't of age, measuring drinks and knowing when someone has had too much.
- Have a taxi service or hotel rooms available that are of no-cost to the employee.

- This may sound silly, but never, under any circumstance, hang mistletoe! As mentioned in No. 4, inhibitions tend to get lowered when people are intoxicated, and the last thing you want to see at the company holiday party is two co-workers letting loose under a green plant hanging from a doorway.

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