



## You Learn A Lot From Smokers And Drinkers

Insights

12.18.13

Tim Sackett always writes practical and entertaining posts, Today's post, *"The Number One Reason You Should Never Drink at an Office Function"* is no exception. Tim goes beyond cautioning us to not make a fool of ourselves with a tongue loosened by alcohol. He points out that bonds can be created and information exchanged by being the sober one among drinkers. Tim then articulates a secret I discovered long ago . . . you learn more from employees, supervisors, and witnesses at their smoke breaks than you do in any interview or formal setting. Whether it be a labor relations matter or an OSHA case where I need to earn credibility and put witnesses at ease, even though I do not smoke, I will regularly keep the smokers company during their break. I usually take a cup of coffee (my addiction) and it does not seem awkward. Many times a solid employee relaxes and proves to be enormously helpful when he realizes that the lawyer puts on pants one leg at a time, just as does he, except lawyers are more clumsy. Tim sums it up even better:

*The only thing better than employees with too much alcohol in them are the employees that smoke with too much alcohol in them!*

*These are a unique group of people who tend to talk too much anyway. I mean they are already going outside for 5-10 times per day for 5-10 minute little breaks to get their smoke on, so they're use to coming up with conversation to pass the time away with their smoker friends.*

*The smoker network gets even better with drinks! People ask me if I smoke because I go outside with the smokers, and I don't, but they have the best conversations. Plus, the smokers are the only "group" in the organization that is truly diverse – you get all shapes and sizes, males and females, Black, White, Blue, Secretaries and Vice Presidents – You'll hear it all!*

*(Tim's Newbie HR Pro Tip No. 23 – hang with the smokers in your organization; you will find out everything before it happens!)*

Don't view Tim's recommendations as some Machiavellian strategy to take advantage of employees. Rather, use your interaction with coworkers at parties and with smokers to build better relationships and to obtain and communicate information in a more civilized fashion. I've won many a case because I treated employees and investigators as normal people and did not put on "my full lawyer."

Howard

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**Howard A. Mavity**

Partner

404.240.4204

Email