

Holiday Parties

Tis the season to be jolly, even in the office. But remember that the holiday office party is really a business meeting in disguise. You can't let down your hair because doing so can derail your career in a hurry.

I have seen this happen way too many times so I wanted to remind you of some guidelines while attending parties in any way associated with business.

1. **Come prepared with several non-work related topics to discuss.** This is a party occasion and unless the boss wants to talk business, steer away from it and use the time to learn more about your co-workers. It will help you develop stronger relationships when you go back to work. Do your best to keep the conversation light and avoid talking about what management is doing wrong or other office gossip.

2. **Keep your body language open.** Don't fold your arms - you will look unapproachable. Keep a warm, friendly look on your face and let your hands relax at your sides. Get a soft drink or water and hold it in your left hand keeping your right hand dry so you can shake hands.

3. **Don't hang out with your buddies.** This is a chance to circulate and network. Get out of your comfort zone and introduce yourself to your boss's boss or even higher and make an effort to talk to people from other departments and teams. It is tempting (and more comfortable!) to spend time talking to your usual buddies, but this is a great opportunity to get some exposure to others. Approach and introduce yourself to others who are standing alone. It is likely they are feeling awkward and will be grateful for the company and a chance to have a conversation.

4. **Watch what you drink.** The safest thing is to avoid alcohol entirely, but if you must, have one or two drinks at the most. Switch to soda or water after that. Be sure to eat before or along with the drinking so you are not running on an empty stomach. Remember that alcoholic beverages often act like a truth serum and can really get you into trouble.

5. **Wear appropriate attire.** Holiday parties are still a business function. Yes, you can wear something dressier than basic office attire, but keep it appropriate.

6. **Be sure to attend.** Even if you don't like office parties, it is important to make an appearance. It will probably be noticed if you don't attend. Consider it a "command performance" and plan to stay for a reasonable length of time. Make sure you speak to key people so you "get credit" for coming.

Remember that the office party is still about business. Enjoy yourself but keep your feeling and actions in check. After all, you will still need a job after the holidays!