



## Putting Your Best Foot Forward At Your Office Party

How you behave at your office party can make or break your career. Many a promising career has been destroyed by inappropriate behavior. The office party is a time to nurture relationships, make social small talk with senior staff, and share goodwill with your peers and boss. Whether you're attending an informal party at the office or a more formal event, always remember that you must convey the highest level of professionalism.



### Introductions – making a good impression

Make it your business to circulate and meet co-workers' spouses and families. Allow them to finish their conversation, wait respectfully for a break and then put your hand out to introduce yourself: "Mrs. Jones, I'm Susan James from the IT Department and this is my husband, Vince. We're delighted to meet you." The handshake is the safest physical contact you can demonstrate at the party. People make assumptions about you within seconds by the way you shake hands. You want your handshake to convey warmth and confidence.

### Tips on effective social handshaking

- Always shake from a standing position (out of respect), smile and make immediate eye contact. Be sensitive to the fact that some cultures are uncomfortable with physical touch and/or eye contact.
- The minimum length of time you should hold onto the other person's hand should be gauged by the length

of time it takes to identify the color of his eyes.

- Volunteer your name first just in case the other person has forgotten yours. It also forces her to give you her name.
- Offer your hand first and firmly grasp the other person's palm. Avoid clasping the other person's fingers, as this may appear condescending.
- A man no longer has to wait for a woman to extend her hand first. Women should shake hands with each other as well as with male associates.
- Repeat the name of the person to whom you are being introduced. For example, "It's a pleasure to meet you, Elaine." This is courteous; it also helps you remember the other person's name.
- If you are drinking a cold beverage, hold the glass in your left hand to avoid shaking with a clammy right hand.
- Wear your name tag on your right side. The other person can read it more easily as you shake hands.

### Tips on hugging and kissing

- Because of strict sexual harassment laws, I suggest you practice extreme caution when you want to demonstrate greetings that could be misinterpreted at your office party. Professional behavior requires that you be discreet and respectful. An alternative would be gently clasp both of your hands over his right hand.
- If you feel comfortable kissing someone in public, move in slightly, go to your left and gently kiss the cheek. In some cultures, it is customary to kiss both cheeks. Never kiss the lips.

### When partners are invited

- A good introduction will explain who each person is and should initiate conversation. "Mr. Adams, I would like to present my wife, Susan. Susan, this is John Adams, the president of our company." You might say: "Susan teaches math at Northmount High School."

(continued on reverse side)

## Taking the Stress Out of the Holiday Season

David Schatzky, Clinical Member, OSP, a Toronto psychotherapist, recommends the following tips to make your holidays more enjoyable:

Unless family members and friends like surprise gifts, ask them what they want and buy it for them. They'll consider you to be thoughtful and caring.

Traditions change. Don't feel guilty if you want to start your own new family tradition. If you're an older relative, try to accept that new families need to do their own thing.



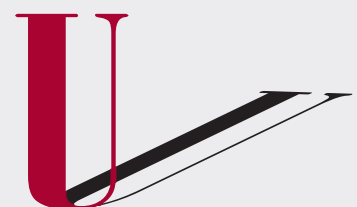
One of the great causes of holiday stress is overeating and overdrinking. Don't overdo it!

Respect the feelings of people who are sad and grumpy at this time of year. A kind word or a thoughtful note goes a long way. If you're one of those people, don't fake happiness. However, do try to spoil yourself in some way.

Take time to smell the roses. Or watch the snowflakes. Or observe children's delight at this time of year. That's what the holidays are really about.

### Other stress-reducing ideas for the holidays:

- Shop and ship early in the season.
- Wrap presents immediately after you purchase them.
- Take advantage of all those catalogs that come in the mail.
- If you have to go out, dress comfortably and expect crowds, traffic and delays.
- Plan a shopping strategy, e.g., find a few stores that provide most of the items on your list.
- Realize that it's OK to "regret" a party or two - don't bite off more than you can chew!



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Volume 3, Number 2

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(Putting Your Best Foot Forward At Your Office Party— continued from the front)

- When introducing a married couple, try to find out if the woman prefers to be introduced by her married or her maiden name.
- Do not introduce someone by his/her nickname unless you have permission.
- If you are introducing a doctor to a colleague, always introduce the individual as “Dr. Stone, I’d like to introduce you to...”. You might be on a first name basis with the doctor, but in public, only omit the title “Dr.” if they have asked you to.

### Office party pitfalls

- Overindulgence in food and alcohol
- Inappropriate attire
- Monopolizing your boss’s or client’s time
- Flirtatious, intimate behavior
- Using office lingo or telling off-color jokes
- Discussing confidential or sensitive topics
- Leaving spouse/date to fend for himself or herself
- Interrupting conversations
- Overstaying your welcome
- Leaving without saying goodbye

### Corporate gift rules: be tasteful, be subtle

Gift giving has become a legitimate part of a company’s marketing and communications program, much the same way as advertising. (By the way, the ritual harkens back to early cavemen, when

Remember, the way in which a business gift is given is as important as the gift itself. Have it wrapped attractively and enclose a personal hand-written note. Forget about just enclosing your business card.

one would give another an extra joint of meat as thanks for extra skins to wear in the cold.)

Gift giving can become an expensive ordeal when you have many clients. Therefore, make them count and make them personal. The more personal the gift, the better. Gifts don’t have to be extravagant to have an impact. What you want to avoid is plastering corporate logos on gifts. A senior vice president at Tiffany & Co. believes that corporate logos belong on gas station calendars, not corporate gifts. If you wish to display your logo, place it, discretely sized, in a subtle location.

Gifts should be carefully thought out. A gift that matches a person’s lifestyle and interests is appreciated. When in doubt, ask the recipient’s spouse or administrative assistant. Remember, the way in which a business gift is given is as important as the gift itself. Have it wrapped attractively and enclose a personal hand-written note. Forget about just enclosing your business card.

### Rules of gift-giving etiquette

1. Knowing people’s tastes is tough when you have a large client list, so stay with classic gifts to be safe.
2. Avoid anything that is decadent, gaudy or tasteless.
3. A bottle of wine in a gift basket is more suitable than spirits.
4. Send floral arrangements to the office, cut flowers to the home.
5. A gift certificate from a specialty store where the recipient frequently shops shows thoughtfulness. Avoid impersonal gift certificates from department stores.
6. Donations to the client’s favorite charity are fine.

7. Home baked goods wrapped in silver foil and tied with a ribbon work.
8. Send holiday gifts one to two weeks before the holiday.
9. Perhaps the most important rule is to check out the company’s policy about receiving gifts. Be careful that it won’t be perceived as a bribe.

### Personalized gifts

- Buy a book or item related to your client’s hobby
- Take a photo of your client’s new home, have it enlarged and place it in a frame
- Initialize miscellaneous gift items
- Personalize a gift basket
- Purchase get-away or stress relief packages, e.g., a half day in a spa.

### Tasteful non-personalized gifts:

Two theater tickets, ice bucket, leather diary, gourmet basket of fruit/jams/imported biscuits, picture frame, book ends, art prints, candles, sports items, box of fine stationery, desk items, videos, a crate of fresh fruit, books/calendars, magazine subscription, or plant for office or home.

### Gifts for your boss

You are not under any obligation to present your boss with a gift. Remember your boss at Christmas by sending a warm holiday card or letter to his/her home, wishing the family happy holidays. You may add that you are grateful for all the support you received during the past year. Should you decide to present a gift, make it personal but professionally tasteful. Cologne might be perceived as too intimate.

## Don’t make wrong assumptions when giving to your international clients

Today’s global marketplace has made giving gifts to clients from other countries a common experience. Inappropriate gift giving may cause misunderstanding and give the impression that the giver is insensitive. When purchasing an item, one must be careful — there are many things to consider. Additionally, it is very important to be aware of gift-giving and receiving customs of others.

### Some gift taboos:

- Don’t give a clock to a Chinese person; our word for clock sounds similar to their word for funeral.
- Don’t use white paper (color of death) or bows to wrap gifts intended for Japanese people.
- Don’t open gifts in front of Japanese people.
- Don’t give someone from China or Latin America knives or scissors as gifts (suggests “cutting” relations).
- Don’t give a handkerchief to people from the Middle East (suggests parting or tears).
- Don’t give four of anything to someone from China, Japan or Korea (suggests an unlucky number, like our 13).



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