



This is an interesting article provided by [Human Resources Director NZ \(HRD\)](#) after speaking with Lisa Orr – a leading protocol consultant and trainer – who gave her top tips on how employers can survive the Christmas party season.

“One of the biggest challenges of the holiday season is the office holiday party,” prefaced Orr. “Although it sounds like a great opportunity to let loose and celebrate the year with your colleagues, the reality is it is a very high-risk event that can have disastrous consequences for your career if you aren’t careful.”

STEP AWAY FROM THE COCKTAILS

Ah – alcohol. What party would be complete without it? It brings colleagues together, facilitates awkward conversations and leaves everyone feeling warm and fuzzy. And yet – it’s the single biggest cause of complaint for employers. So, perhaps this season, step away from the bar.

“One of the simplest ways to have a successful office holiday party is to keep our inhibitions in check, and the easiest way to do that is to stay sober,” Orr told *HRD*. “I mean no drinks at all. Even if you are given a few drink tickets or, as is often the case, a colleague who doesn’t drink offers you theirs - it’s never a good idea to be under the influence at these events.

“This party is an opportunity to network with senior executives and to connect with colleagues and that’s a lot easier to do with a clear head. So, enjoy that club soda with lime with pride, you’ll be happy you did the next morning.”

DRESS TO IMPRESS

Everyone likes to don their glad rags during the holidays – but it’s important that employees know where to draw the line. Remember – whilst this is a party, it’s a workplace party meaning that dress codes should still apply.

“This is not the time to break out your skin-tight sequin dress or your leather pants,” warned Orr. “This is an office event so that means you need to step up your professional wardrobe game, not break out the club wear.

“For men and women, it’s best to err on the more formal side of the dress code. Even if your event is at a pub, keep it business casual with a tailored blazer, pressed shirt and polished footwear.”

KNOW YOUR RISK FACTORS

A recent [ADP](#) report found that more than one-in-five younger employees (18-34) admit they personally have acted inappropriately at a work party – nearly twice the overall average. By recognising the factors which may cause an issue, employees can take the necessary steps to avoid potential pitfalls.

“The more you understand your risk factors for having too much fun at a holiday office party, the better you can protect yourself from a misstep,” added Orr. “Men seem to be higher risk than

women at these events. In fact, the survey found that men (15.7%) were much more likely to admit to personal bad behaviour at the office holiday party than women (5.9%)

“So, if you are a man or on the younger side, and you do have extra risk factors, plan ahead for how you’re going to keep it professional this season. It may even help to have a low risk colleague nearby to help keep you on track.”

PREPARE TO BE PROFESSIONAL

Keep your surroundings in mind when you’re at any workplace event. Of course, it’s a great time to let your hair down – but it’s also a chance to showcase your business acumen. Orr suggests seizing upon the opportunity to network and brag a little.

“Get up to speed on the important projects in the firm, know how your work is contributing to their success and the successes that others have had this year,” she told HRD. “That way when you are mingling and chatting, you’ll have lots to talk about and you’ll be able to build stronger connections and raise your professional profile, which is really the point of attending this event.”

BEHAVE AS THOUGH YOUR CAREER DEPENDS ON IT

Because – well, technically, it does. Don’t be so naive as to think what happens at the party stays at the party. The study from ADP found that one in four people polled (25.7%) said they or their colleagues have acted inappropriately at a work holiday party – in fact, one in ten admit they themselves were the culprit.

“While steering clear of cocktails can really help keep behaviour in check, the key is to actively keep it professional,” adds Orr. “That means no gossip, no embarrassing stories, no dares and generally behaving like the adult you know you are. And if saving your reputation isn’t motivation enough, remember there are consequences to behaving badly.”

“The office holiday party can be a fun and successful event as long as you accept it is never *really* a party, but instead an extension of the workday, disguised with holiday decorations, loud music and festive cocktails.”