

Balancing Fun and Professionalism at Holiday Parties

Sarah Sawyer: Welcome to this week's OK at Work, with myself, Sarah Sawyer and my colleague Russell Berger as attorneys at Offit Kurman, and today we are talking about holiday parties. It is that time of year. We are headed into the holiday season. I know we here at Offit Kurman have several get togethers that people have already been doing for Thanksgiving and will be doing for the upcoming holidays and New year to celebrate with each other and come together. So obviously as companies prepare to have these parties and get together, several years ago we were talking about COVID and germs, and in our last episode we covered that a little bit. Fortunately don't need to really cover that today as it relates to holiday parties.

But what are some things that employers should be keeping in mind this time of year, Russell?

Russell Berger: Should definitely still pass on the communal pretzel jar even at holiday parties. But no, the main point I know we say this kind of every year now on [00:01:00] OK at Work when we touch on the subject.

But the main point is that, the holiday party is still a work event and it's still work and the work rules still apply. Yeah, it's more relaxed. People may very well have a drink or two, but the way we treat each other as employees of a business are still applicable.

There, there's no loosening of that standard. Again, conversation's casual, it's a relaxed environment. People are more focused on having fun and that's the right thing. That's what you want for this party. You wanna have a party that expresses to your employees, we really appreciate you.

You've done a great job. We value you. Try to promote that engagement. So you wanna prioritize that, but at the same time, you wanna make sure that you're still following the basic workplace rules of how you treat people, what kind of topics or off limits for a workplace conversation. Those sorts of things still apply.

Sarah Sawyer: Yeah, I think a lot of managing risk and having success with these types of get togethers starts at the planning process and getting everything together and how you set the tone as the employer for exactly what you just [00:02:00] described Russell, thinking ahead to the environment where the party is gonna be, whether it's gonna be in the office, whether it's gonna be offsite, how people are going to get to and from these parties, resources available if there is going to be drinking, those types of things, reminders to employees around safe transportation and as managers and leaders, then companies the way that you plan and execute the event itself is really a good way to set that reminder.

And as opposed to walking around just reminding everyone they're at work, it's probably not going to create that fun of an environment. But yeah, there's subtle ways to do that in the way that you execute things.

Russell Berger: Yeah, absolutely. It's that balancing act that we face every year of we want this to be a good party.

We want people to really enjoy themselves, but we don't want anyone to go too far. So you don't have to make everyone sign a waiver when they show up for the party and remind them all of the rules, but a casual reminder in advance of Hey, this still workplace event, workplace will still apply.

And you just put that out there. I think that can be an effective way of [00:03:00] doing that without showing up to the party with a list of rules. 'Cause that person's always the life of the party and most popular person there.

Sarah Sawyer: Yeah we know that well as lawyers, we're the rules people.

We're always the most fun at parties. Well, Thank you Russell and we'll see you next time.

Russell Berger: Thanks, Sarah.