



‘Tis the Season to Advance Your Career While Attending the Office Holiday Party

By Emily L. Breckenridge

Though you may be the life of the party at IIT, that role at an office holiday party may be a mistake to take on. Your behavior at the office holiday party could help or kill your career, so you’d better be good, not for goodness’ sake, but for your career’s. The holiday party is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your capacity to handle social business situations, which is a required skill for upper level executives at most companies. These five tips will ensure that you make a good impression on your co-workers, and let the office gossip on Monday morning revolve around someone else.

- 1) **Skip the eggnog:** Or if you do choose to drink, do so in moderation, and make sure you have a safe way home. Drinking too much is the easiest way to embarrass yourself, and make a lasting, bad impression. Keep all beverages, alcoholic or non, in your left hand, freeing your right to introduce yourself with a firm handshake. Eat a light meal before you arrive, so that you can enjoy the food, but so that you’re not too busy eating to talk. Pick finger foods that are easy to eat with one hand.
- 2) **Save the Flannel PJs for Christmas Day:** Dress appropriately, and keep it professional. Some offices may require black tie for the holiday parties, while others may allow jeans. Either way, make sure that your clothing won’t harm your professional image. Keep the holiday pizzazz tasteful and to a minimum, and for women, make sure nothing is too short, too tight or too revealing.
- 3) **Timing is Everything:** Though attendance at the office party may be optional, you should plan on attending, and you should spend a significant amount of time there. You can be fashionably late, but don’t show up 15 minutes before the party ends. Plan to arrive about 10 to 15 minutes into the party. Though you shouldn’t show up too late, you also shouldn’t stay into the wee hours of night. Once the party has dwindled, and the party planners are cleaning up, it’s probably time to go.
- 4) **Network, Network, Network:** This may be your only chance to meet the C.E.O. of the company. Take it. Introduce yourself, and if you’re not sure what to talk to him/her about, ask if they have plans for the holidays or a new year’s resolution, but don’t monopolize his/her time. You should also introduce yourself and socialize with people who you don’t work with on a daily basis. You may meet someone who can help you with a project, or introduce you to a new client. If you can’t think of anything else, you can talk about business, but try to keep the conversation light, not stressful.

- 5) **Don't Forget Your Manners:** Make sure you thank the party planners before you leave. You'll stand out from the crowd, because most people will forget about those people who worked hard to plan the evening.