

So you're having a Holiday Party!
By Gayle Gilberto, CIS



Thanksgiving comes late this year, which means most holiday parties are being planned within the first two weeks in December. That's not very far from now but it's still not too late to plan your gathering or to add some extra spice to the existing one! If you haven't booked your venue or suppliers yet, Kristin O'Conner, Director of Sales and Marketing of Capers Catering advises the following: "Be willing to be flexible! Thursdays in December are the quickest dates to go. If you're willing to do a different day we can play around and make it work for you. But, we almost always can make it work for our clients."

You may also consider moving your party into the New Year. January and February dates offer better venue and supplier availability and your guests can relax and enjoy your celebration without their personal Holiday plans getting in the way.

Build up excitement for your upcoming celebration by advertising through your company social media. Hint at the activities to come. If you haven't told your guests already, consider "teasing" the theme to build anticipation. For example, if you are having a carnival theme, pass out popcorn or cotton candy during



lunchtime or after a company meeting. Or invite a salsa dancer into your office to perform in advance of your “Havana Nights” theme event.

Another great way to build excitement for your Holiday party is to add an awards component to the affair. Create a few fun categories for your employees to vote on to get them involved and pumped up. Or look for in-house talent and have them participate in some way. I had a CEO who leads a company sing-a-long for his employees at the end of a Holiday celebration. This quickly became *the* beloved company tradition guests look forward to every year!

Kick up your food and beverage choices by chatting with employees and don’t be shy about brainstorming fresh ideas with your catering manager.



Kristin O’Connor offers this advice: “We’ve had clients collect a few family recipes that we can incorporate into a menu. This spices up an event and makes employees experience all the feels when their own holiday traditions can be represented to their colleagues. Also, say yes to all the desserts- don’t make it an afterthought. Whether it is a fun unique station, like make your own

s’mores, smashed cake bar, boozy hot chocolate station, or passed cookies and milkshakes, people love to put their healthy lifestyles on hold this time of year.

More active crowds love games of all types and there are plenty of options available! From casino games to arcade and video games, space, taste, and budget are your only limitations.

AC Anders, VP of Corporate Events at Fun Enterprises recommends activities that can double as company giveaways:

“All too often we are at an event and take photos that live in our phone or on our social apps. Switch things up and get a photo program that the guest leaves with the photo in a snow globe or snowflake. Also, personalization and DYO programs give your attendees something fun to do and take home.”

”Gifting this year? Check out the many companies offering to buy one give one



options now (Bomba socks, One World Play and Smile Squared are just a few) guests can feel great knowing their gift was also donated to someone in need. Or you can empower your employees to be even more actively involved in the spirit of the season.



AC Anders: “Some companies decide that since it is the time of year for giving back it is a perfect time to sponsor a community project. Here are a few suggestions:

- Caroling at a senior center or hospital
- Volunteering at a food bank
- Collecting coats for the Winter Season ahead
- Donating Toys for a good cause”

Finally, don't forget to make your event sparkle— try dazzling guests with a great theme. Glitz is always popular this time of year and themes that blend well with interactive activities are particularly hot right now. Brainstorm with an event design professional to find the theme that best suits your company's demographic and image. This is your party and you can customize it in myriad ways that will make all your attendees feel like the VIPs they are!!!