

Professional Development

Networking Your Way through the Holidays

Amber Travis-Ballinas

Career Consultant

Networking is the process of building mutually beneficial relationships which support both your personal and professional goals. It is a continuous, systematic, goal-oriented approach of reaching out to others, developing a broad list of contacts, and using them to your advantage when you need assistance.

Meeting people and developing relationships is the first step in the networking process. Holiday parties, events, and gatherings are excellent opportunities to meet new people and to make new connections.

Follow these simple guidelines for success:

- Spend more time listening than speaking. People like to talk about themselves. Ask questions and be sincerely interested.
- Develop rapport. Find commonalities with others.

continued on page 2

THEME OF THIS ISSUE:

THE HOLIDAY PROFESSIONAL

- 1 Professional Development: Networking Your Way through the Holidays
- 1 Image Enhancement— Holiday Party Etiquette
- 2 Holiday Gift Giving Guide – Tips for Business Gift Giving
- 4 Sidebar Article: Damage Control—Recovering from Bad Holiday Behavior
- 4 Image Enhancement—Appropriate Attire for Holiday Office Parties

Image Enhancement

Holiday Office Party Etiquette

Linda Wedick

Image Consultant

In today's competitive job market, knowing how to behave professionally will significantly affect your career advancement opportunities. Conversely, behaving inappropriately in a professional environment can potentially devastate your image, reputation and career progression.

Many people do not realize that the office party is **not** the same type of event as a social gathering with friends and family. There are different rules of engagement for the office party, and what is considered to be acceptable in one environment is not considered acceptable in the other.

This is not the appropriate venue to 'get crazy', 'throw down', or 'act a fool'. Rather, consider the office party an extension of your regular work day and behave accordingly. Your professional image depends on it.

Rules of Office Party Etiquette:

- RSVP Early / Express Gratitude
- Verify that the Invite includes an invitation for a Spouse or Guest
- Determine the Proper Attire & Plan your Outfit Accordingly (See page 4 for more)
- Greet and Thank the Host when you Arrive
- Keep your Conversations Professional
 - Do not discuss Religion, Politics, or any Vulgar or Sexual Topic
 - Do Not Argue or Debate
- Stay in Control
 - Do Not Drink Too Much / Not at All
 - Do Not Flirt with your Boss or Coworkers
- Thank the Host Before You Leave ❖

The most common mistake is consuming too much alcohol. Know your tolerance level for alcohol, give yourself a maximum limit, and stick with it.

- Have an *elevator speech* prepared, so you can market yourself at the appropriate time. Bring your business cards. Ask for the type of assistance that you need.
- Do keep your discussion of business brief and avoid being a pest. It is a party, after all.

Networking is a slow, continuous process and it takes time to develop, nurture, and grow your network. Begin the networking process by taking advantage of holiday gatherings and events. Meet as many new contacts as possible and potentially advance your career—all while having fun and enjoying the holidays. ❖

Holiday Gift Giving Guide

Tips for Giving to Business Associates, Clients, & Coworkers

Amber Travis-Ballinas
Career Consultant

The most special holiday gifts are chosen with great consideration to show thoughtfulness for the recipients' professional interests, needs, and desires. Business gifts intended for clients, associates, and coworkers should be creative yet not overly personal.

The safest gifts are 'communal gifts' which include items which can be enjoyed by an entire team, department, or office. This prevents accidentally omitting someone and avoids hurting feelings or offending someone.

Most organizations have a limit on the value of gifts given and accepted for business purposes. An appropriate amount to spend on a business gift should range between \$20 to \$35 per gift.

Most organizations prohibit the acceptance of cash gifts. It is always a good idea to check the organization's gifting policies to ensure that the gifts fall within the acceptable type and value range.

A note of caution; homemade gifts or food are not appropriate business gifts. When giving food and beverage items as gifts—it is recommended to give sealed, pre-packaged, non-perishable commercially-produced items. Non-alcoholic beverages such as coffees, teas, & cocoas, are

most appropriate for business gifts.

Whom Shall You Gift?

Generally, it is not necessary to give your boss or direct supervisor a gift. In fact, it could be considered 'brown-nosing' or seeking favoritism. However, depending on the circumstances, it may be appropriate to give your supervisor a tasteful, unique, not too personal gift.

It is appropriate for supervisors to give a small gift to their employees to show appreciation for their hard work all year. Be certain to include all subordinates and give the same or similar type / cost of gift to each employee.

Exchanging gifts with coworkers is optional. If you choose to give gifts to coworkers either give everyone on your team the same gift. Otherwise, be discreet and exchange gifts with individual coworkers outside of the workplace.

Professional Gifts

It is always appropriate to give communal gifts for an entire office / department / team. Whenever possible, choose a gift which is unique and meaningful to the recipients. This is an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of the recipients' tastes, interests, and wants.

Group Gift Suggestions:

- Food Baskets with Individually Packaged and Sealed Healthy Snacks & Beverages
- Oversized Cookie Cake with a Message or Logo Decoration in Icing
- Creative & Unique Fruit, Cookie, or Candy Bouquets
- Lunch Catered to their Office

Individual Gift Suggestions:

- Office / Computer Accessories
- Writing Utensils / Stationary Sets
- Clocks and Calendars
- Event / Movie Tickets
- Gift Certificates / Gift Cards

The best gift is one that leaves a lasting positive impression and a feeling of goodwill with the

SIDEBAR ARTICLE:

DAMAGE CONTROL--

RECOVERING FROM BAD BEHAVIOR

It is never easy to reverse a negative impression. However, it is possible to minimize damage to your professional reputation and career.

The key is to be proactive. You must act quickly and follow these suggestions.

APOLOGIZE to any person / people you have offended, upset, or angered.

- *It is best to apologize in person*
- *If appropriate, a written apology should be offered*
- *Your apology should be concise, humble, and sincere*

EXPLAIN that you have LEARNED an important LESSON from the experience.

GUARANTEE that the bad behavior will NEVER BE REPEATED.

THANK the person / people for their 'understanding and consideration'.

MOVE ON. Do not dwell on the incident. ❖

Appropriate Attire for Holiday Office Parties

Making a Professional Impression

Amber Travis-Ballinas

Career Consultant

Maintaining a professional image is crucial for overall career success. A true professional will demonstrate good judgment under all circumstances. Choosing the appropriate attire for attending career-related holiday events conveys a message about your sense of judgment. This is an opportunity to establish your professional image and reputation and to create a positive impression amongst your colleagues.

Below are suggestions for appropriate and professional festive attire for **any** holiday career-related event which you may attend. Choose well and make the most of this opportunity!

Festive Attire for Men:

- Seasonal sport coat or blazer in dark color, and dress pants
- Open-collar dress shirt
- Tie--regular or holiday-themed
- Appropriate dressy coat
- Clean leather dress shoes and belt
- Dark socks
- Clean shaven / well- groomed

Festive Attire for Women:

- Cocktail dress, dressy skirt / slacks, and top, or dressy pantsuit
 - No strapless, low-cut, sheer, metallic, or backless attire
 - Length should be a maximum of 4 inches above the knee
- Feature holiday colors or basic black
- Appropriate small accessories with minimum sparkle or embellishment
- Appropriate dressy coat & handbag
- Dressy pump or simple strappy sandal with maximum 2.5 inch heel
- Hosiery, if appropriate
- Make-up should be 'after-five' with minimum sparkle
- Hair should be styled or in an 'up-do' ❖

Attire for a holiday office party should be over-dressed rather than under-dressed, conservative rather than trendy, and professional rather than sexy.

FREE CAREER ADVICE

Listen to the 55 minute audio & visual presentations with Q & A sessions:

“Acing the Interview Process”

<https://meeting.austin.utexas.edu/p83189528/>

“Win-Win Negotiations”

<https://meeting.austin.utexas.edu/p67654174/>

“Tips & Tactics for Career Success”

<https://meeting.austin.utexas.edu/p64675740/>

OR

View this series of webinars and download the MS PowerPoint presentations by clicking on the following link and then choosing the webinar from the list:

<http://www.mcombs.utexas.edu/alumni/careers/programming/>

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, ASSISTANCE, NEWSLETTER ARCHIVES, OR TO BE REMOVED FROM THE MAILING LIST; PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR CONTACT US DIRECTLY:



Career Creators

“The Career Design Specialists”

Professional Career & Image Consulting Services

www.CareerDesignSpecialists.biz

AmberTravisBallinas@CareerDesignSpecialists.biz

512 788-2012 Office