

YOUR GUIDE TO

# Christmas Parties



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Christmas 2017 will be my 11th year of planning Christmas Parties and over this time, I have directly experienced the real benefits of having an evening celebrating with your colleagues, but also the hesitation that comes from employers about throwing one. As many of you will have experienced, some people tend to let their hair down a little too much at the office Christmas party, so should companies play safe and opt to award a monetary bonus instead?

Some employers view the tradition of holding office parties in a time of economic and employment challenges as inappropriate but do they need to bear in mind the cost of not holding one?

I have put together a list of reasons why I think a Christmas party is so worthwhile for your employees and your business.

## 1 IT IS IMPORTANT TO SAY THANK YOU!

The party is a thank you for hard work which has taken place over the last year. A nice idea is to add an awards ceremony to the evening with some fun accolades in there too. We did this one year and I won 'best fringe' and received a trophy that looked like an Oscar and before you ask, yes, it's in the downstairs loo!

## 2 "TAKE CARE OF YOUR EMPLOYEES AND THEY'LL TAKE CARE OF YOUR BUSINESS" ~ RICHARD BRANSON.

If your employees are happy and motivated it will benefit your business in the year ahead. Taking care of your team goes beyond a decent pay packet, it's about truly understanding the importance of a healthy, calming and positive working environment. Allowing time away from the office for employees to socialise and avoid talking about work will alleviate stress and help your employees to unwind.

## 3 SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY

You have all your staff together in one room at the same time. How often does that happen? You can use fun activities to incorporate your company brand messages and ethos, keeping those values at the forefront of people's minds for the year ahead. For example, if one of your brand values is to give back to your community, run a raffle with all proceeds going to your favourite charity or play a game of pictionary with your company's range of products. This will also strengthen team work and enhance you staff's relationships with each other.

Hakan Enver, Operations Director at recruitment firm Morgan McKinley, says

"It's a great way of helping celebrate the culture of a company beyond just business success,"

## 4 GREAT LEADERS MIX

Encouraging Trainees, Assistants and Coordinators to mix with Managers and Directors boosts morale. This removes any negative hierarchy which is common place in most industries. It can make managers seem more approachable and can encourage more open conversations back in the office.

## 5 GIVE STAFF SOMETHING TO REMEMBER!

Staff will talk about a good party for most of the year, well, until it's time to talk about the next one. This positive event is a perk of the job and will increase staff retention, build long-lasting relationships and increase job satisfaction.

## THAT'S GREAT, BUT WOULDN'T THEY BE HAPPIER WITH A BONUS?

Even with these reasons in mind you may still be thinking, “why not just award a bonus instead?”

Research tells us that in order to have a psychologically significant impact on motivation, and to allow employees to really feel like they received reward and recognition, the bonus would need to be close to 7% of their salary\*. Based on the UK's average full time salary of £27,600, that would be £1,932 per person and for most employers, that's a whopping expense! AND REMEMBER, 20% OF THAT WILL GO STRAIGHT TO THE TAX MAN.

## BENEFIT YOUR STAFF NOT THE TAX MAN

You can entertain your staff without causing them a tax liability. You can spend up to £150 per year per head without any tax implications. This limit will include the Christmas party, the summer barbeque and any other similar functions. Once you spend over £150 per year per head, the whole amount becomes taxable, not just the amount over £150 so be careful. The £150 limit also applies to guests attending, which makes the limit £300 if a member of staff brings their partner.

\*source: [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com)

# ARE YOU READY TO PARTY?

You might now be convinced that a Christmas get together is a great idea, so now is the time to plan something that your employees will actually look forward to and enjoy. If you're creative, proactive, organised, assertive and brave then this is the challenge for you! If you're none of the above but have still landed the responsibility, don't panic. Many dread the prospect of organising the office Christmas 'do', So to put you at ease with the entire planning process, here are some of our top tips in organising a night to remember FOR ALL.

## ESTABLISH A DATE & BUDGET EARLY

Talk to the powers that be and get a budget set, this will help you narrow down the options. It's also important to get a date set in order to start making enquiries. You may also want to consider an early or a late party; a party in January can give the team something to look forward to and can give you more flexibility on availability and more competitive prices. It may also be worth considering if you need to cater for various religions and this would remove the festive association.

## SOURCE THE VENUE

Firstly decide on the sort of party you want to have and this will mainly depend on the demographic of the guests you are inviting. Do you need overnight accommodation or at least the option? Do you want plenty of entertainment and music? Are you looking for a set menu? Does the venue have easy access to public transport or a taxi service nearby? All these things are worth thinking about when looking for a venue. Did you know that according to a survey of 700 office workers by londonoffices.com, one of the top reasons for not wanting to go to the office Christmas party was because of a bad restaurant choice? Make sure you visit the venue in advance and try the food where possible.

## MAKE A DECISION

You've been given the job of organising the night so use your own initiative and make decisions. If you like the sound of something, book it. You don't want to involve too many opinions in the process as it can mean over complicating things.

## SPREAD THE WORD

Organise in plenty of time as Christmas is a busy period for everyone. Those with children will potentially need to organise childcare, move around other commitments, sort out their outfits and most importantly, it gives you plenty of time to collect the deposits if needed.

## CREATE EXCITEMENT

Your colleagues are going to need to know all the essential information as soon as possible, but hold back on the finer, creatives details, it leaves something as a surprise for the night. Why not create invitations? Take note of the venue's theme and use this within your design to create excitement amongst your team.

**KEEP SCROLLING TO GET  
YOUR HANDS ON MY  
FREE CHRISTMAS PARTY  
CHECK LIST...**

# CHRISTMAS PARTY CHECK LIST

- Decide on who you are inviting colleagues and/or partners.
- Determine budget.
- Select a preferred date.
- If you want to do a themed party decide this now as it may affect choices further down the line. Why not set up a Pinterest board to gather and save ideas?
- Decide on what you want for your venue and request 5-7 quotes.
- Create a binder to store and organize ideas, worksheets, receipts, brochures, etc.
- Short list 3 venues and make site visits – sampling the food and service ideally.
- Send a save the date email / note to the guests – you may wish to ask guests to register interests for accommodation or lifts home if you are booking on their behalf.
- Book entertainment if you are required to do so.
- Book a coach for a return journey to the venue.
- Put together the formal invitations – I would recommend enlisting the help of a professional as a gorgeous invite will set the tone of the event whether you want formal or informal.
- Send invitations along with the following information:  
*Menu for pre-order and ask for dietary requirements / allergies.*  
*Confirmation on accommodation requirements.*  
*Highlight what costs are being covered and what they need to pay for.*
- Track RSVPS ideally on a spreadsheet with pre-set formulas – saves you time in the future!
- Gather menu pre-orders in an agreed format for the venue/caterers.
- Compile rooming list and send to the venue.
- Advise your band or DJ of the demographic of your guests as this may affect what songs they decide to play. If it's a mixed group why not pop a song request sheet in with the invites?
- Order decorations for theming if required.
- 4-6 Weeks in advance ensure you have all RSVPs and put together the table plan.
- Send menu pre-order to venue/caterers at the agreed time probably 4-6 weeks in advance.
- Put together the formal table plan & place cards.
- Final meeting with venue.

# ABOUT THE MONTAGU ARMS HOTEL

What is the secret of the quintessential English country house experience? We think we know – opulent, comfortable, intuitive surroundings – roaring fires during the autumn and winter and fabulous food and drink. And lots of places to simply be, from commodious armchairs and sink-into sofas, to enjoying a swift half at our country pub, Monty's Inn.

Upstairs we have 22 en-suite bedrooms, all different, some including four-poster beds, and every one designed to make you feel completely at home.

We can tell you that we're dedicated to using seasonal, free-range ingredients. We can tell you that many of our suppliers carry the New Forest Marque, identifying authentic New Forest fare of the highest quality. We can tell you that our chef, Matt Tomkinson, believes that free-range organic produce is not just better because of its purity, but because it tastes a lot better too.

But eating is believing...

Treat your favourite clients this Christmas to an unparalleled dining experience. Head chef Matthew Tomkinson creates a seasonal, menu capturing a delicious and exciting range of flavours, textures and aromas; food you will definitely want to linger over. Or enjoy an award-winning afternoon tea as an alternative Christmas celebration with colleagues by a crackling log fire. The only thing you can't have are gimmicks, it's all about enjoying a traditional Christmas here.

To speak to Lauren more about organising your 2017 Christmas celebration:

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