

10 YEAR END PARTY TIPS



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FOREWORD

As a speaker and entertainer who has hosted and performed at corporate year end events for most of my life, I thought it opportune to put together this short PDF booklet with tips and observations I have collected over the years in this business.

I trust I can leave you with one or two tips that will make your next year end event so much more successful!



10 YEAR-END OFFICE PARTY TIPS

It's that time of year where you are likely to be planning your year end office party and don't quite know what to do. On top of everything else, you have a diverse workforce and are worried about catering to everyone's culture and religious beliefs! For many people being lambasted with organising such an event is associated with stress!

Your worries are over! Here is a short booklet with tips and ideas to make that whole process much easier!

Although most office parties are held towards the end of the year and it is still seen as a Christmas party for many, it has become common practice not to focus on the religious element of the event, but to focus on a celebration of the year that was.

So rather than stress about catering to all cultural groups, direct your attention to organising a **neutral** party for everyone that isn't religion or culture specific. It must be seen as a celebration for all – simple as that!

For some, it can be viewed as an alcohol fuelled legal bomb waiting to explode, where no one knows what to expect! Don't fear, with these simple tips that follow, the whole process can be a breeze and fun time for all.

Remember that the main aim of an end of year function is for the company to express it's appreciation for the work done during the year. It is a time when everyone is thanked for their efforts and wished a peaceful break over the holiday season.

IDEAS

1.) First things first – you need to identify a team of people that will get involved in organising the party! If you have the budget and can assign an event planner to do it all for you, that's great. Alternatively ask for volunteers and have people assist you that enjoy such activities. You will also see that my ideas below encourage participation as well.

2.) Start with a theme. Think of something that is fun. Be aware that many fancy dress themes require people to hire costumes. That isn't always the best route to follow. Rather think of a clever idea involving wearing a certain colour, or item of clothing. A wonderful idea is to use a letter of the alphabet as the theme, i.e. a 'H' party. In other words everyone must come dressed in something to do with the letter 'H'. (Harry potter, Hairy, Hit Man, Homeless, Hideous, Hooligan, Hippie, Hagar the Horrible, etc.) Get the idea? Only you know the make-up of your staff. If you are an outgoing company and fine with 'over-the-top' outfits, that's fine. But if you have a diverse staff compliment and know that anything overtly distasteful might offend, be sure to put rules in place at this point and make sure everyone understand the parameters of the allowed clothing.

In fact, so that no one accuses the organiser of using a letter around their theme preference, hold a luck draw during lunchtime where all the letters of

the alphabet are put into a bowl, and a random person does a draw. Do this 2 months before the event, its a good excitement builder for the party. Also, 2 months is ample time for people to think of ideas of what to wear! Make sure to encourage everyone to be creative and post ideas on the notice board. Create anticipation for the event and make sure to have a prize for the best dressed.

Additionally, once the letter has been chosen, you can have a competition between staff members to come up with a catchy name for the party. These are all those additional activities that boost morale, build excitement and get everyone really excited about the event.

3.) Over the festive season, venue hire tends to become really expensive. If the budget is tight and you rather have extra cash for entertainment, then consider holding the party at the offices. If the weather is great, you can even organise a barbecue outdoors! I have performed at many year-end functions where they decorated the parking lot downstairs and held an awesome party right there. Remember, it doesn't always have to be top venue in the town. Tables & chairs are not that expensive to hire and a stage for a band or entertainer can be set up using wooden pallets from the store. The focus should always be on a celebration and having fun. One can even have a competition for staff who assisted the most, or who came up with the most unique decorations.

Nothing stops the whole company from going on a picnic, or doing a fund raising activity for the less fortunate, as using this as the year end function. Depending on where you live and the climate over the November/December period, the options are plenty!

Of course, if the budget allows, it's also fun to book a venue and have them take care of everything. For the organising committee, this will always be the easiest option.

4.) Decorations - please make sure to make this a non-religious event. It is an end of the year party and although many people might call it a Christmas party, you do not want to offend non-Christians. Nothing is worse than having angels and Christmas stockings as part of the decorations, or gift exchanges and expecting a devout Muslim to take part in this. Focus on non-religious and fun activities.

We live in a politically and culturally sensitive world today and as part of the organising team you should try have representation from all cultural and religious groups. It must be made clear to everyone attending that as the organising committee you are focusing on a neutral celebration. However, you have no control over people who decide to bring their own culture along. Someone may well dress up or wear a religious symbol that is offensive to someone else. What you don't need is to deal with petty complaints afterwards. Today way too much time is wasted trying to keep everyone happy. This is mission impossible. People need to be mature and responsible enough to

understand that this is a fun event for all. As such people should all be responsible enough to act accordingly, but if someone does step out of line, or a decoration that is deemed offensive does land on someone's table – deal with it.

On that note, I have attended year-end functions where the executives specifically asked the main religious and cultural groups to each prepare a 10 minute play on what the holiday period meant to them, but with a funny twist. It was a fascinating event that I will never forget. Some groups focused on the religious aspects, others focused on the commercialism of Christmas, while there were those that focused on family values. In this way everyone learnt about each other's views and had a good laugh. As an inspirational speaker I found this idea particularly clever, as when you are laughing, your guard comes down and you are way more open to take in new information.

Many company executives have stopped year end functions because of the small minority that always complains. Here are the operative words, "small minority." Why must everyone suffer because of one or two troublemakers? There is a time and place for everything – this is a year-end function. At no point should anyone be penalised or given negative treatment should they not feel comfortable attending. If anything, the focus at the party should be for people to mix 'outside' their clique and get to know everyone else at the party. Dress up parties always make people drop their guard and tend to make this easier. But be warned... some people may just drop their guard too much!

5.) Food - free food is sure to attract the crowds, especially at a venue where all the catering is planned beforehand. If you are hosting the event at your offices, one of the safest routes to cover all dietary needs and beliefs is to cater more for vegetarians, than non-vegetarians. Food can become expensive, but a big pot of vegetable curry, or soup that can feed many people is really cheap to make. Of course it is great to offer a variety of sushi, tofu and other exotic dishes if your budget allows. There is also nothing wrong with having Hot Dogs on the menu for the evening. Just make sure you have a supply of vegetarian sausage as well.

Another option is to identify 2 or 3 fast-food chains within a close radius and give each employee a budget on what to spend, and let them order the food they want. In this way everyone has been given the same money to spend on food they want, and no one can point fingers that a particular group ate more than another. Thinking out of the box does help.

6.) Drink - alcohol will always cause problems for certain people. There are those that handle their booze, and those that lose control. The best solution that I have seen is to offer each employee a set of 3 to 4 tickets that can be exchanged for a soft drink, wine or beer. No spirits are served and all the drinks have an equivalent value. In this way no one should have more than 3 to 4 glasses of wine and hopefully remain sober! At a venue, you can have a cash

bar for those who want something stronger. Again, company policy and rules should also dictate acceptable behaviour in this instance.

7.) Give-away prizes are a good way to attract people to attend. You can approach suppliers and vendors for gifts. Even use part of the budget. If you can afford to give everyone something small, that's great. If not, work on a fair lucky draw process for all. Personally I would leave the senior staff out of this and focus on sharing the prizes amounts regular staff members. Within certain industries companies can often purchase items or travel at cost prize and really share awesome gifts with people that could normally never afford such items.

8.) Ideally allow families to attend the event. Unless it's during working hours, I would seriously consider inviting the family as well. The holidays are about family, and if you want to plan the event out of normal working hours, then I would seriously suggest you consider inviting families as well, at the very least partners if it is an evening do. If you want everyone to attend and think highly of your company, and budget allows, have a special venue/room next to the event with babysitting facilities for those people with children. Another option is to spend the day with picnic baskets out on a wine farm with fun family activities for all.

9.) How long should the party be? That all depends on whether you are hosting it during work time or after hours! If you are planning it over a lunchtime or during an afternoon on a weekday, which will pretty much restrict your time and also assist in keeping control over how much food and alcohol is consumed. If you are hosting it at a function venue in the evening, then it is still advisable to have a planned schedule up to a certain point. If you are booking entertainment, always plan them for immediately before or after the main course.

10.) This is the time that the CEO/Boss/Leaders need to acknowledge their staff and say a big Thank You for the work done throughout the year. You don't want long speeches, but you do want sincere sharing and thanks to be shared with everyone present. This is also the time to make special announcements and share long service awards and achievement certificates. Remember, it is a celebration, so leadership needs to celebrate and acknowledge staff at these events

Finally, book entertainment that will appeal across the board. The wrong entertainment can make or break your event. If it is a dance party, great then music is the main focus. Today with diversity of beliefs and cultures it is really difficult to find an act that is suitable across all spectrums and enjoyable for all. Hence my suggestion of booking, me Wolfgang Riebe as your 'corporate magician and speaker who creates Memorable Magical Moments for everyone across the board!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Wolfgang Riebe is a unique international keynote speaker on strategic magic who has inspired millions of people worldwide. He is a best-selling author with appearances in over 150 countries - from Hollywood to Singapore. Star of numerous television shows and many of his own prime time TV series, coupled with 27 years experience in the speaking, service and entertainment industry, make him a world leader in his field.

In 2012 the National Speakers Association (NSA) awarded Wolfgang the CSP (Certified Speaking Professional) designation, which is the highest award given to any professional speaker in the speaking world. This designation is currently only held by less than 800 professional speakers globally.

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