

Party Protocol



The silly season is here in full swing. It's time to relax and let your hair down. Is it really? Beware the pitfalls of the office party. Check out our checklist first!

It is a social event and it's still business. Thinking that you might give it a miss? Forget it – it is part of your career building. No need to stay all night, just long enough to be seen and do a little socializing.

Office staff love nothing more than getting into work the next day to chit chat about the general attire, behaviour and who took off around the corner with who. These stories, like Chinese whispers spread like wild fire and always make their way back to your manager and your family. Remember what you were hired for and the position you hold in the organization. The festive feel of the champagne wears off by Monday morning and the antics from Friday night's party are not funny any more.

To ensure your success all round for a really good night out, follow these six guidelines.

1. **Clothing** – Respect your position in the organization. Are you a leader? Are you a positive role model or a warning of how not to be? The party is not the time to do the slinky, bust enhancing, tight little number that you reserve for your hot date with your partner. Of course you will dress up to be appropriate for the festive occasion. Minimize the flesh and keep the fit appropriate. Would you feel comfortable if a client saw you in that outfit?

Cathy works as a senior personal assistant to a leading financial planning organization. We shopped for an appropriate dress for her to wear to a work function. The test for it being right came down to three questions:

- *How comfortable are you in the style and shape?*
- *Is your husband going to be proud to see you in this for a work function?*
- *Will it be appropriate in terms of your manager's position?*

We purchased the dress and it worked superbly for the event, enhancing her credibility as a professional in the finance industry. It's a timeless style that Cathy will be wearing for years.

2. **Language** – Many people find offensive language disrespectful and some jokes are just not appreciated. Showing respect will pay huge dividends in your career. I've seen many jokes told at Christmas functions after a few glasses of bubbles that are too close the edge. People tend to remember what's not appropriate and make conversation of it on Monday.

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3. **Socializing** – This is a good opportunity for you to mingle with some one you haven't had the opportunity to spend time with yet. Avoid the usual circle that you already know so well. Check in with them of course, but make the time to move on and mingle. It's a great opportunity to learn about what other departments are doing and learn about what's happening in other areas. You never know when you may need to call on them to assist you with a project of your own. Having a good rapport is priceless in business.

If someone enters your conversation group, welcome them and introduce them to others. Always introduce the most senior person in the group first.

4. **The Kringle Gift** – Tempting as it is to purchase something really funny and totally inappropriate, don't do it. Look for something that you think that person will really appreciate. A business consultant received a gift of a pair of socks with FIGJAM printed on them. (F--- I'm good just ask me). What the giver did not appreciate is that this guy is a human being with feelings too. The gift was not appreciated.



5. **Liquid & Crystal** – Alcoholic beverages and other mind altering substances tend to have us behave in a way that we normally would not. Just because the company is paying for the evening doesn't give you licence to get trashed. Set yourself a limit of two to three alcoholic drinks and reach for mineral water in between. Perceptions are very powerful and you get to manage exactly how others will perceive you.
6. **Behaviour** – Alcohol and recreational drugs have the ability to change how we behave. Sitting in a corner with another flirting or inappropriate soul-bearing can have dire consequences. Being human beings, one thing can and often does lead to another and the consequences can be dire!

Think of the office party as an opportunity for you to show yourself at your very best. Have fun, dance the night away and mingle with many people. That will send the message that you are friendly, fun loving and enjoying the evening. This will be remembered at performance review for promotional opportunities.