

## 9 Steps to Making Holiday Gatherings a Marketing Success

*By Kimberly Alford Rice*

The holiday party season is upon us and while festive gatherings can be fun, they can also be a minefield for professionals to navigate. As a new lawyer, it is important to understand the marketing nuances of presenting and building a strong image before workplace superiors, peers, and business contacts. The little things do matter and can be magnified in professional social gathering situations.

The following holiday party tips can help you to make your seasonal engagements a marketing success in furthering a solid reputation and fostering strong business relationships.

- 1. It's business.** Remember that firm and business group holiday parties, are just that – business. This should guide your behavior accordingly from how you present yourself and the topics you raise with your key influencers and superiors. Be friendly but not too familiar.
- 2. Show up.** Understandably, not everyone enjoys holiday parties and can find them uncomfortable and even boring. However, it is important to at least make an appearance at business holiday functions if only to make your presence noticed. Your absence will surely be noted.
- 3. Be Gracious.** Mind your manners in greeting and thanking your hosts. In an office party scenario, seek out firm management and thank them as well. They are, after all, underwriting it.
- 4. Check the Guest List.** Before inviting a guest, double check that spouses/dates are welcome. Sometimes, parties are planned for employees only.
- 5. Know the Dress Code.** The firm holiday party is not where you want to unveil your most form-fitting outfit. Festive is fine, revealing - not so much. The time and place of the party may drive the dress code but if you are unsure, check with your host.
- 6. Food/Beverage Rules.** As with any networking event, it's not about the food and drink. Enjoy yourself but limit your alcohol intake and avoid piling food onto the small plates. It can create awkward and sometimes reputation-damaging situations.
- 7. Maximize Network Opportunity.** Strategize how to effectively network at holiday gathering by chatting with as many colleagues and introducing yourself to those you don't know as well. Office parties present a useful opportunity to strengthen existing relationships and foster new ones.
- 8. Mind Your Communication.** Though holiday gatherings are a perfect place to get to know colleagues and superiors on a more personal level, be mindful not to dominate the conversation. Keep the conversation light and stick with safe topics. The last thing you want to do is to speak disparagingly or complain about anyone or anything. It will undoubtedly come back to haunt you.
- 9. Relax and enjoy yourself.** Embrace the holiday season in the company of your business associates and have fun with it.



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