

How To Create An Inclusive Company Holiday Party

WorkBright.com | December 2021



Recently on the WorkBright blog, we talked about how to host a company holiday party. While hosting a holiday party is fun, it can be isolating, depending on what your team celebrates. Today, we wanted to cover how to have a genuinely inclusive holiday party so everyone can celebrate their culture at work.

Understand How Your Employees Celebrate the Holidays

First things first, you should understand how your employees celebrate or do not celebrate the holidays. It's essential never to make assumptions about your employees or what holidays they choose to celebrate during December. We all grew up with different traditions, and it's important to respect that as an employer.

Use an Anonymous Survey

If you are struggling to determine how your employees celebrate the holidays, consider an anonymous survey that asks employees to share anecdotes about what they observe and how they celebrate it. Use the survey as a general understanding of how people celebrate at work. You don't need to match answers to faces, it's anonymous after all, and allows employees to speak freely about how they celebrate in December.

Do Your Research

After you get the bulk of your answers, do your research on the different traditions your employees have. How can you use their traditions to create a safe environment at work for everyone? You don't have to lean on your employees to explain their culture (unless they feel comfortable sharing their story.)

Diversify Your Party Planning Committee

Next, you should diversify your holiday party planning committee. If you can hear a variety of voices on your committee, your party will also become more diverse.

While diversifying your party planning committee is a fantastic feat, the team at the Society For Human Resources Management states, "don't schedule the event at a time (such as Friday night) that might conflict with someone's religious observances." Hosting a meeting on Friday seems like such a small thing, but if you are pushing towards making your workplace more inclusive, this could ruin your progress.

Focus On Celebrating the Year

Next, it's important to spend most of the holiday party focusing on the bigger picture. The best way to create a truly inclusive holiday party is to let the star of your party be something nondenominational. You can never please everyone. It's essential to acknowledge the multi-cultural environment you work in, while also trying to keep things focused on the holidays instead of a specific holiday. It's a balancing act paved with learning, striving, and doing better year after year.

Let People Bring or Request Items/Food That Represents Their Holiday Beliefs

We all have food or decor that is unique to our situation and holiday celebrations. Instead of making a strict list full of food or decor that caters to one type of celebration, let people bring food, drinks, or decorations that speak to them. If you are having the party catered or professionally decorated, consider allowing people to request different types of food and decor. You could also decide to serve a non-traditional menu.

Use the Right Language

Next, you should take your time to use the right language for all of your holiday events. Whether you are using that language to invite people to your event or the right language during your event, do your research. If you are announcing anything at the party, make sure you take the time to learn the pronunciation of what you are talking about. It's a small gesture that can go along way for showing how much you care about your employees and their cultural variances.

Make Sure All Holiday Events are Voluntary

Since you can't appeal to everyone, don't require that people attend any holiday events. Holiday events should be a fun, voluntary event to wrap up the year instead of a requirement for your employees.

Another critical step is to make sure that your holiday events are on days that the majority of people can attend. If you diversify your party planning committee, they should be able to share their concerns about the day of the week you host your party.

Take in Feedback for Next Year

Your inclusive holiday party isn't going to go off without a hitch in the first year. One of the best parts of this experience is that it's full of learning and striving to do better. Your first inclusive holiday party might not go as well as planned, but you are showing that you are trying.

To continue learning and growing, take in feedback after the party is over. Send out an anonymous survey for people to fill out. Ask them what they thought about the party and how you could improve the party next year. Find out what they did and didn't like. Don't take negative feedback personally, use it to grow your awareness, and do better next time.

Conclusion

Hosting an inclusive company holiday party can be challenging, especially on your first try. Work hard to do the background work, but give yourself some grace because you can always try again next year. Take feedback from your employees every step of the way. You'll be on your way to creating an inclusive company holiday party everyone will love.