



FACTSHEET
FOR EMPLOYERS
AND MANAGERS
FROM ABHR LIMITED



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THE CHRISTMAS CONUNDRUM

FROM: Human Resources Manager
TO: All Employees
RE: Christmas Party

I'm happy to inform you that the company Christmas Party will take place on Dec 23 at the Grill House. There will be a cash bar and we will have a small band playing carols..... feel free to sing along. Merry Christmas to you and your family.

May I clarify that in no way was yesterday's memo intended to exclude our Jewish employees. We recognise that Chanukah is an important holiday which often coincides with Christmas. However we will now call it our 'Holiday Party' and there will be no Christmas Carols sung. The same policy applies to any other employees who are not Christians. I hope this addresses your concerns.

Regarding the note I received from a member of Alcoholics Anonymous requesting a non-drinking table ...you didn't sign your name. I'm happy to accommodate this request, but if I put a sign on a table that reads, "AA"; you wouldn't be anonymous anymore. How am I supposed to handle this? Somebody? Also I forgot to mention that now there will be no present for employees as the union feel that £10 per person is an insult and the company cannot afford anymore, therefore to prevent this issue no gift will be made.

What a diverse group we are! I had no idea. Following your numerous complaints I have arranged for members of Overeaters Anonymous to sit farthest from the buffet and pregnant women will get the table closest to the toilets. Yes, there will be flower arrangement for the Gay men's table. To the person asking permission to cross dress, no cross dressing allowed though we will have booster seats for short people. Low-fat food will be available for those on a diet. We cannot control the salt used in the food for those with high blood pressure. However there will be fresh fruit salad available as a dessert for these people and for the diabetics amongst you.I am beginning to hear voices in my head.

FROM: THE CEO
TO: All Employees
RE: Holiday Party

I wish to inform you that the HR Manager is currently away from work and I'm sure that I speak for us all when I say we wish her a speedy recovery. In the meantime, management have decided to cancel our Holiday Party and give everyone the afternoon of the 23rd off with full pay.

We know that although the above example is extreme but unfortunately most companies will face the conundrum of what do for their employees at Christmas time. Therefore at ABHR we have developed a guide to help you through the festive season.

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

Do we have one? The first question many employers ask is whether to hold a party at all. It is entirely a decision for the company, however don't let potential hazards put you off organising something for Christmas. The Christmas party can make your employees feel valued and encourage a positive working environment.

What do we do? Consult with your employees and ask them what they want to do, you could share the budget with them and allow them to input into planning and organising the event. This way it is more likely that you will meet the needs and wishes of the majority and employees will feel responsible for its success.

Christmas Gifts. When deciding on a gift to give to employees it is always best to avoid alcohol altogether particularly in view of laws on discrimination on religious grounds for those who cannot drink. However if you are giving alcohol ensure that a non alcoholic gift of equal value is also offered.

Christmas Trees and Decorations. If you choose to have Christmas decorations you should ensure that a relevant risk assessment is carried out to prevent any Health and Safety hazards e.g. fire, fall or trip risks etc. The law does not outlaw Christmas decorations such as trees, tinsel and lights as these are secular and not inherently religious, therefore if you wish to decorate your office you may choose to do so.

Christmas Meal. In some religions eating certain meats is forbidden. Therefore to cater for all employees and prevent any discrimination claims, if you are providing food you should ensure that there is a balance of meat and vegetarian options.

Misconduct at the Christmas Party. If you organise, or even financially contribute towards a Christmas party for your employees you are liable for their behaviour. The legal and best practice position is to treat any "misbehaviour" at the Christmas party or pre-party in exactly the same way as it would be dealt with in the workplace. Any different approach could lead to employees taking action for all sorts of issues such as harassment, sex discrimination etc.

You may also be responsible for behaviour of your employees who have pre party drinks at another location. Case law has determined that this situation counts as an extension of work and so all the laws covering discrimination at work still apply. Employees generally make the mistake of thinking that conduct outside the workplace cannot result in a warning under disciplinary procedures. Therefore prior to the party you should make employees aware that the Christmas party is a company function and that decorum is expected, you should also communicate the standards of behaviour expected at the party and refer them to the relevant procedures i.e. disciplinary, bullying and harassment etc

Absence. To try to ensure that employees attend work the following day after the party, it is recommended that you should ensure that all staff realise that disciplinary action could be taken if they fail to turn up for work and there is reason to believe it is due to over-indulgence or best of all have it on a night when they are not expected in the following day.

BAHH HUMBUG

You do not need to cancel Christmas to stay legally compliant. By following the advice provided and considering all employees circumstances we are sure you and your employees will enjoy the festive season without incident.



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