

## FESTIVE SEASON

# KEEP YOURSELF TIDY, CHEERS

Things you shouldn't do at your work Christmas party, even when sober. Cara Jenkin reports

**M**ANY workers get lulled into the casual nature of a work social event and get too involved with letting down their hair at Christmas parties, with disastrous results for their personal and professional reputations.

SEEK research finds two in three organisations will host a Christmas party this year.

While vomiting in front of the boss or pushing a co-worker may be faux pas most workers will avoid, other actions can also lead to embarrassment or even put workers in legal trouble.

## DON'T FALL OFF OR KNOCK OVER ANYTHING

Corporate Dojo founder Karen Gately says this can be especially problematic if workers are talking to someone in a position to influence their career.

"Take, for example, the young guy who was mid-conversation with the board chairman when he suddenly found it far too difficult to stay upright in his seat," she says. "In an odd display of regaining balance, he slid on to the floor and stayed there for a moment."

Workers do not have to be tipsy to fall victim, and while accidents happen, it should not be caused by being overzealous.

"(At one work party) it wasn't the greatest moment when two overly enthusiastic guys decided to make a beeline for the buffet table," Gately says. "Looking much like a couple of rugby players fighting for the ball, their grab for the last dessert landed them both on the other side of where the table was once standing."

She warns what happens at the Christmas party definitely does not stay at the Christmas party.

## NEVER STEAL GROG

It can be tempting to take one more for the road and make the most of the hospitality being offered by the employer but resist that temptation, Gately says.



**PARTY ETIQUETTE:** If you fall off your seat don't drag the rest of the party down with you.

"Accept when the party is over, that it's over," she says. "Apart from it being against the law, it's really not OK to take without asking – especially when you have already been given so much."

"This one happens a lot: the bar is closed, the crowd is being moved along and someone decides it's a good idea to stock up on beverage supplies."

## AVOID TALKING TOO MUCH

After a few champagnes and with loud music as a buffer, it can be easy to slip up and gossip with a mate about a dress the boss is wearing or confess about plans to resign in the new year.

SEEK resident psychologist Sabina Read says social functions can help workers bond but it is important to keep a sense of what is pro-

fessional and not share information they would not otherwise tell colleagues.

"If you witness oversharing by a colleague that makes you or the recipient feel uncomfortable, call out the behaviour by letting the offender know that what's been said doesn't feel right," Read says.

"When we observe and accept other people's offending behaviour, we send a message the behaviour is acceptable and can inadvertently normalise toxic and damaging behaviours."

This includes giving the boss "constructive feedback", Gately says.

"While of course being open to feedback is important, the reality is most people aren't that open to hearing it when you're slurring your words or being overly opinionated," she says.

"Contemplate the reaction of the CEO who

was told, 'You really could be a much nicer guy you know. Then people would want to work for you'."

## BUT IF YOU WENT TOO FAR ...

Gartner research and advisory senior principal Arj Bagga says it is important to show genuine remorse.

"Own the mistake as soon as possible, provide context as to why you exhibited that behaviour – perhaps there was a personal reason or work stress, which was a cause of the behaviour," Bagga says.

"If you provide context to leadership and management then they will be well informed to make a decision regarding the consequences of such poor behaviour, whether this means a slap on the wrists, or more seriously, termination."

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