



Welcome:

Welcome to this month's edition of IEA's registrant e-zine "Information Overload". Well it is almost here yet again. What is I hear you ask? The silly season of course, otherwise known as Christmas.

This month we will be looking at the many issues surrounding Christmas "do's" and work related social functions, the etiquette and what happens when it all goes horribly wrong. For those of you who are also working on contract there is a timely reminder for you all. Whilst you may groan at the thought that I am going to be getting on my soap box and telling you what you can and cannot do – please remember that the reason we put these newsletters together is because we have a duty of care to you, and more importantly you have a duty of care to yourselves and your colleagues.

You will be pleased to know that we have finally put the archive of these newsletters onto the web. To check out the back issues just go to www.iea.com.au. You will also find a link to the main edition of Information Overload as well as your Registrant Resources version, as well as a link to the annual reports.

We hope you enjoy reading.

Lorraine Bradshaw
Marketing & Training Coordinator

In this Issue we will be looking at:

- Workplace Etiquette;
- Work Based Social Functions;
- After Hours Social Functions;
- Something to consider if you are organising a social function;
- The Legal Considerations;
- A Final Thought;
- A Christmas Rhyme.

Workplace E tiquette

Workplace etiquette should not get thrown out of the window when Christmas knocks on the office door bearing gifts and alcohol. Please remember that we live and work in a very multicultural society and not everyone celebrates this Christian festival.

Please bear in mind that most organisations have a business to run – no matter what the day of the week happens to be. If you or your colleagues have deadlines that need to be met, excessive chatting during impromptu meetings

and morning teas can be very disruptive for those people who feel that they need to work.

And have you noticed that when a group of people get together, the conversation gets louder and body language becomes more animated the longer the conversation goes on? Not only can this be extremely disruptive, it can quickly become inappropriate. Not everyone finds mass joke telling and practical jokes funny, especially if they are bearing the brunt of the so-called humour. Please bear in mind that the person may find the matter offensive, which can cause stress and intimidation as they usually feel they cannot speak out for fear of recrimination. If you notice a certain segment of the office makes an excuse to leave every time something loud and inappropriate occurs then it is likely that you have just offended a number of your work colleagues. As most organisations work on the basis of team performance, then it is likely that your team will not be functioning at its best.

Work Based Social Functions

If your organisation has a policy of holding its social functions on the office premises there are a couple of things to consider.

- Keep your valuables with you at all times, or locked away where no one can see them. Not everyone is as honest as you.
- Turn off your computer or make sure the password control has been set. This prevents others from reading what is on your computer, and more importantly, documents, emails and inappropriate web based material, jokes etc cannot be sent from your terminal.
- If everyone is responsible for the mess left behind after a party, then everyone should be responsible for the clean up. Don't be expected to do the dishes on your own. Of course, you may be fortunate and the organisation who you work for may have a team of cleaners organised to do that aspect for you, in which case you don't have to worry about it.
- Make sure you remember to drink lots of water if drinking during the day. Dehydration can occur quickly. If you are planning on driving home after work, bear in mind that the 3 glasses of wine may not have worked its way out of your system by the time you are due to go home, especially if all you have had to eat are a few peanuts and a few soggy chips. If you can, plan ahead and car pool or use public transport that day.
- Treat everyone professionally at all times. Some people assume that what is said and done at a social function is not covered by workplace etiquette. According to a recent survey by employment law advisers Peninsula, three out of four employers have, at some stage, had to take disciplinary action against workers following a staff Christmas party. http://bcs.besnesseurope.com/cmn/viewdoc.jsp?cat=op&ct=ft&docid=BEP1_Feature_0000060317
- Sexual harassment is another obvious risk, and employers should do more than confiscate the mistletoe. Staff should understand that inappropriate behaviour and comments - particularly relating to sex, sexual orientation, race, disability,

religion or belief - are unacceptable, and may amount to harassment.

- Presents are another area fraught with problems if there are no guidelines. Anonymous present "swaps", which are sometimes called "Kris Kringles", or "Secret Santas" can cause embarrassment, offence and can breach the anti-discrimination act.

After Hours Social Functions

As we have already discussed, these can be held on the premises, or more often than not – at another venue. The advantage of that is of course, is that you can come and go as you please. However it should always be remembered that you are a representative of the organisation that you work for and care should be taken when attending these functions. This of course does not just apply to Christmas party's, but any kind of "do" that you are attending, and can include Golf Day's, and business lunches.

If you are working on contract through an employment agency such as ours, you are a representative of that organisation and we respectfully ask that you present yourself in a professional manner at all times.

- Recognise that the influence of alcohol may boost confidence levels giving rise to inappropriate behaviour of a sexual or aggressive nature.
- Don't drink too much,
- Don't accept a ride home from employees not known well to you,
- Don't wear clothing branded provocative.

But do remember to have fun, so long as it is not at someone else's expense.

Something To Consider If You Are Organising A Social Function

Do:

- Have a definitive start and finish time for your function
- Monitor any individual alcohol excesses
- Ensure food is provided, and (hopefully) consumed, if alcohol is provided
- Provide cab charge vouchers or alternative transportation methods to driving for employees leaving the function

© IEA 2004. All rights reserved. You are free to use material from the Information Overload newsletter in whole or in part, as long as you include acknowledgement of source.

- Instruct and advise managers, supervisors and/or owners of the business to keep an eye out for (and, if necessary police) inappropriate behaviour by employees towards others
- If “Kris Kringles” are arranged, advise employees to keep their Kris Kringles appropriate and to generally be aware of cultural, religious or other sensitivities that not only the recipients of the gifts may have, but also others who may see the gifts demonstrated

Don't:

- Serve alcohol to staff who are not yet eighteen
- Continue serving alcohol to someone who appears to be intoxicated already
- Continue to provide drinks after the designated finish time
- Allow intoxicated people to drive
- Require employees to sit on Santa's knee to receive their Christmas gift, or kiss Santa, or “kiss the boss”
- Place mistletoe anywhere

- Allow inappropriate tomfoolery or conduct towards others.

The Legal Considerations

Holding a social function is fraught with legislative difficulties. Consider:

- Occupational Health & Safety Legislation
- Anti-discrimination legislation, including provisions dealing with sexual or racial harassment
- Criminal Code, including assault either of a physical or verbal nature.

A Final Thought

If you have been taken on by an organisation to cover absences through illness or holiday of an existing employee then the host employer is not going to be very pleased if you “chuck a sickie” the day after a social function. Whilst some may tolerate you booking the day off in advance, not everyone will.

A Christmas Rhyme

The Silly Season is almost here
Tis time for a little Christmas cheer

But first a little reminder to one & all
Before one attends the Host Employers Christmas ball

Occupational Health & Safety is the first
So beware the alcohol when quenching your thirst

Be polite and professional at all times
Lest you be caught with discriminatory crimes

Time off during working hours cannot be paid
So adjustments to timesheets should be made

A final note to wish you well
Before they sound the finishing bell

Whilst Christmas comes but once a year
Moderation is the key to good cheer



If you would prefer not to receive this newsletter, please send an email to training@iea.com.au with “unsubscribe newsletter” in the subject line. If you have any suggestions as to what should be included in future editions, then please send an email to training@iea.com.au.

© IEA 2004. All rights reserved. You are free to use material from the Information Overload newsletter in whole or in part, as long as you include acknowledgement of source.

Information Enterprises Australia Pty Ltd
Unit 4, Upper Level, 201 High Street, FREMANTLE WA 6160
Tel: 08 9335 2533 Fax: 08 9335 2544 e-mail: training@iea.com.au