

# Tips to Survive the Office Party with your career and relationship intact

Remember that staff party where ... John picked up that woman, I mean literally picked her up and held her in midair, or the one where Janis from accounting told the manager exactly what she thought of him. Those parties become the stuff of legend. If it happened at a friend's place, no big deal, but at a work related event, it can cause a career malfunction. Office parties are still business, so it helps to keep a few things in mind.

## **Take my spouse, please**

If spouses or partners are invited, you don't want to ignore them or you'll hear about it when you get home. Nor should you be joined at the hip. Being overly affectionate in public is just as bad. Passionate kissing can make other people watching feel uncomfortable, especially if one of the witnesses is your spouse. Be discrete when using your secret terms of endearment, or they won't be so secret around the water cooler for 'fuzzy-wuzzy-honey-bunny'.

## **War and peace**

With people that you don't know well, certain topics of conversation can be as dangerous as walking on thin ice holding a plugged in string of Christmas lights. To keep the evening peaceful and light, avoid hot-button topics like religion and politics, especially office politics. This isn't the time to start complaining that you should've been the one who got that promotion or start explaining to purchasing exactly what they're doing wrong.

## **What colour lampshade should I wear?**

We've all heard about people wearing lampshades on their heads but have you ever seen anyone do it? If you or your partner is in doubt as to what to wear, call and ask the organizer to find out what's typically worn. If an event is described as dressy-casual don't come in your jeans. Dress up a little, so you're in the top 25 percent of the attendees. But anything that **Cher or J-Lo** might wear doesn't quite fit the office party. Leave something to the imagination. So that means no plunging necklines, thigh high slits or bare midriffs and we are especially talking to the men here.

## **I drink therefore I am ...**

Take care of your guests and colleagues by supplying taxis or rides for anyone who needs it. It also pays to remember that our most embarrassing moments usually involve too much alcohol. If this happens at the office party, it can be a major CLM (career limiting move). In vino veritas. If you have any secret strong feelings towards a colleague, such as love or loathing, keep it under your lampshade. You may not remember what happened the next day but you can bet that everyone else will. A cell phone camera may even capture that Kodak moment for the internet, your spouse, the courts or anyone else who missed it.

## **Last and possibly least**

You don't want to be the first to arrive or last to leave. So don't arrive too early unless you are willing to give a hand setting things up, otherwise you'll be in the way. The same goes for being last to leave, never a good idea (especially if a lampshade has attached itself to your head).

## **All things in moderation**

Moderation is the operative word for successfully negotiating business quasi-social events.

The office holiday party can be an excellent opportunity to network with people in other departments and get to know clients or colleagues better. Celebrate the season, but treat it like the business event it is and you won't go wrong.