

Three Types of Holiday Celebrations with Employees

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With many employers still having employees work from home due to COVID concerns, company holiday celebrations may look different than pre-pandemic times. However, this doesn't mean that you can't have festive times with your employees as there are still lots of fun ways to celebrate the holidays. Here are some ideas for activities that you might want to consider for this year.

In-person celebrations

While large parties in ballrooms and event spaces with lots of guests may still be on hold, it is certainly worth considering having small group gatherings. You might have departments and teams have their own celebration, so it's limited to a small number of employees rather than the full company. They can go out for happy hour, have a party in the office, or a number of fun and safe gatherings. At Kernutt Stokes, we've planned activities such as office putt-putt and ice skating.

There are also great options for outdoors, even from the comfort of a warm and dry vehicle. Organize a holiday treasure hunt around town with small teams and have them take selfies with the various items they have to find. Some fun ideas to search for are a living nativity scene, a life-size nutcracker, and of course, Santa. Another idea is to have a Christmas lights caravan; have everyone meet at the same starting point and then head out to check out the lights around town. Consider having everyone take a picture of their favorite and then compare pictures to see what everyone liked. This is also a great way for employees to have their families join in on the fun too.

Virtual celebrations

After nearly two years of Zoom meetings and working from home, virtual celebrations may not be as fun, but they are still something to consider, especially if people aren't comfortable with being in-person. There are ways to have fun without feeling like you've been staring at your computer screen endlessly. There are a variety of holiday games that are perfect for a virtual work party, including holiday trivia, name that Christmas tune, guess the Christmas movie character, and even Pictionary-type games. Our company hosted a virtual party last year that had all of these activities, and although my attempt at drawing a Christmas tree was quite amusing, everyone had a great time, and we are doing it again this year. Another idea is to have a virtual movie party. Streaming services such as Teleparty (formally Netflix Party) let you stream a movie from your own device while it plays at the same time for everyone who has logged in. It even has a chat feature so you can chat with your coworkers while watching the movie.

Just as many baby showers and bridal showers have been virtual over the last couple of years, gift exchanges can be done the same way. You can have everyone open their gifts at the same time, individually, or even separate everyone into breakout rooms for smaller "gatherings." Secret Santa exchanges work well in this format – just pick the date that everyone will open their gifts and reveal who their Santa was, and people can drop off and pick up gifts prior to the open date.

Community giving

The holidays are a great time for planning activities around encouraging employees to give back to the community. The nice thing about these types of activities is that you can find one that best suits your employees and whether they prefer in-person or something they can do on their own. There are numerous

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activities that happen year-round but may make for a special holiday celebration with your staff. These include things like serving meals at shelters or helping out at local food banks. And of course, monetary donations are always a great way to help out.

Many nonprofit organizations participate in various types of giving trees, where they hang ornaments on trees around town with gift ideas – including needs and wants – for kids, teens, and adults that they serve. These tags are a great way to find one that might have someone similar in age to your own child or someone special to you, or someone who has similar interests as you. Our team in Corvallis has partnered with [CASA of Benton County](#) to provide gifts for a number of tags, which will provide gifts for children in foster care in Benton County. Other organizations host toy and gift drives, where you can simply purchase and drop off items at the organization and they'll then distribute it or make it available for families to come in and select items for their kids. Our team in Bend is currently gathering toys and gifts for the [Ronald McDonald House Charities](#) in Central Oregon.

Another idea for giving back to the community is to “adopt” a family. This can often be done through a nonprofit, a church, or a school. The organization will work with the family, which may often be a single parent and child/children, to find out what they need as well as what they would like. This is a great way to provide for an entire family, including providing a grocery gift card to help with holiday meals, and let employees choose what items or family members to whom they want to give. At our Eugene office, we have adopted five families through the [Hope & Safety Alliance](#), fulfilling their lists of household items and gifts, as well as grocery gift cards and other fun holiday items.

However you choose to celebrate the holidays with your employees, may it be fun, festive, and in a way which people can feel safe and healthy to participate so that hopefully next year we can get back to big gatherings with lots of people.