

Communication etiquette at your year-end office party



By [John French](#)

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The annual office year-end party is usually where some of the craziest communication of the year takes place. Colleagues are usually beyond drained and exhausted at this time of the year and yet over-jubilant and excited at the same time. Add in to this equation free food and booze and we often see a terrifying communication cocktail in which employees often commit career suicide and take far more than just a day to recover!



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Here is my advice to help you to leverage and manoeuvre your way through this important communication occasion.

The year-end function is still a work function. Sure, we all want to relax and let our hair down, but no boss or manager wants to learn that he has employed a drunken hooligan. Rather think of the office party as an extension of your working day. Don't get carried away with the careless thought that it's a free night out.

Your office year-end party may be your most important communication platform for the year. It is usually the only time that the entire staff gets together and everybody gets to notice, observe and assess how you carry yourself. Make the most of this personal PR platform. Get out there and mingle. One of the best strategic reasons to attend this event is to network. Try to speak to as many people as possible in the room. Make sure that you make a favourable impression on your boss and superiors.

Get to know your boss and seniors on a more personal level

The year-end function is the perfect opportunity for you to get to know your boss and seniors on a more personal level. It is the one time they are guaranteed to be more open and relaxed and you can maximise this accessibility. Shine in front of your superiors and make a great impression!

Free alcohol is wonderful, in moderate amounts. With freedom comes responsibility. If you overindulge it will simply demonstrate a lack of control and that you are willing to abuse company resources and privileges. Remember that a hangover can disappear in a day, but your reputation may be gone for a lifetime. Think twice before making the office

party the venue for a first date or back office fling.

Get the balance right. Tread the fine line between being the office clown and frowning like a party pooper who does not join in the fun. Be clever. Have fun but don't embarrass yourself or others.

Select your topics of conversation carefully. You don't want to create enemies and destroy your professional relationships. Knowing what to say and what not to say is vital in maintaining a respected and professional reputation and encouraging a promising career. To determine professional conversational boundaries, avoid issues that might make anyone feel uncomfortable. Danger topics include physical appearance and health, race, religion, personal finances and office politics. Also, refrain from gossip. Just one unsuitable remark can damage how others perceive you and will affect your reputation and future advancement. Keep your words light and positive.

Your colleagues deserve your full attention. Don't spend the time talking on your cellphone or SMSing others. It is rude and very inappropriate during this festive occasion.

Meet as many new people as possible

Don't just hang out with your co-workers that you know well. The year-end function is an opportunity to further career goals and advancement. Look for opportunities to interact with superiors that you don't interact with regularly. Meeting co-workers from other departments can open new doors to future advancement or work productivity. Have fun with your buddies, but be sure to meet as many new people as possible.

Wish everyone a great festive season/Happy Christmas and a Happy New Year. Engage and make eye contact and make sure that you sound as though you mean these good wishes.

Exit the party with charm and grace. Don't be the first or the last to leave. Remember to say goodnight and thank you to the most senior person, the party organiser and your boss before you leave. A respectful thank you email the following day also will make you shine.

In conclusion: celebrate with your colleagues, but remember to keep your professional hat on. The next time you're up for a promotion, you'll reap the rewards of your clever and strategic year-end professionalism.

ABOUT JOHN FRENCH

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