

"The Season of the Office Party"

It's the season of the office party, a time of year when troughs of eggnog and platters of hors d'oeuvres are plentiful and when both employers and employees mistakenly believe that the holiday party is something the other wants.

Studies show that 76% of those surveyed hate the annual event, and when asked where they'd rank it, most say somewhere between invasive medical procedures and being mangled by farm equipment.

Some misinformed employees see the yearly soiree as a social event, a time to let the guard down and chat with senior management as equals. Sadly, in mid January, these same people may also find themselves on the guest list of other company events, like outplacement counseling and resume writing workshops.

Most of us however, see the office party for what it is, a necessary evil that's tedious and inconvenient, a little like regular flossing. No amount of punch or sushi can downplay the potential for career disaster, especially when forced to speak with higher ups without being able to hide behind PowerPoint slides.

The safest events are those held within the workday, a time when an employer is willing let you stop working early, but not willing to let you go home. More dangerous though are events held after work, where you can bring a spouse or date, which incidentally doubles the chance of one of you saying something fatally inappropriate. While they'll urged you to be on your best behavior, they'll may serve alcohol, tempting a mishap, a bit like insisting you walk through a grizzly infested forest, and forcing you to wear a parka lined with fresh liver too.

A employment firm from the UK, a country where business trends hit slightly ahead of the US, if only by 6 or 8 hours, recommends impressing others with some obscure fact. Since it's embarrassing stating one others already know, I advise just making something up, being certain to quote a source that can't be verified. Use me if you have to.

But you can also impress and show loyalty in less risky ways, for instance by getting a corporate tattoo, perhaps with the company logo or cafeteria hours, or if you aren't averse to body piercing, consider the company's product tastefully impaled through your eyebrow or lip.

I've declined this year's invitations, informing party-givers that I will be in the hospital donating a kidney. It dawned on me that I have used the same excuse for the past 4 years. I just hope people have been drinking too much to suspect.