

Company Celebrations in 2020

By Samantha Dowse; October 1, 2020

I think many of us are looking forward to the close of 2020 in a few short months. It's been a turbulent year to say the least. As companies look to wrap the year, the question of how, if and what to celebrate comes into play. I encourage you to look back on the year with the positive lens of a leader, finding encouragement in the previously unheard of obstacles you and your team overcame and outlining the ways this year will positively impact you and your company going forward. We all discovered new things about ourselves, our company and the people we work with this year and we will take those lessons into 2021 in beyond.

As you look at gathering your teams and coming together, there are a lot of new factors to evaluate. The lowest risk option according to the CDC are virtual-only activities and events with the highest risk events being large, in-person gatherings with people coming in from outside the local area and meeting in a space that does not allow for social distancing. That being said, you could host an event at a lower-risk with a smaller group (or by breaking up your event into smaller gatherings) with an outdoor setting that allows guests to keep a social distance of 6-feet apart and by focusing on the local area only with a limited sharing of objects.

Social distancing and mask wearing are the cornerstones of a safer event. Encourage waving and verbal greetings versus handshakes and hugs. To avoid someone barking warnings at people who get too close, design your event to be socially-distanced friendly with marks on the floor for queue areas such as bathroom and food grab-and-go stations, clearly designated traffic flow directions, clear seating options, and work to limit completely open floor space. It's also important to limit ambient noise so people can have clear conversation while maintaining social distancing. For mask wearing, consider having company or holiday swag masks available (and make sure they're comfy!).

Take a collaborative approach to holiday planning this year and get a group of employees together from various parts of your organization to assist with strategy. This helps to ensure that a variety of voices, opinions and fears are taken into account. Communication is also key as you approach an event to make sure employees and guests understand what safety measures are being taken and what guidelines they will need to follow.

2020 has been an intense year for everyone, with tough decisions being made all around. This makes it a great year to focus on an activity instead of a traditional holiday celebration and party. Here are some ideas for bringing your team together as we close out the year – whether it's a modified celebration or an activity designed to boost team connection & morale.

1. **Hold a contest for decorating cubicles, other work areas, or windows.** Ensure your workplace is the image of holiday cheer throughout the season and have employees work together (either spaced out on teams or independently executing a group vision) to decorate a work area, an office, a conference room, windows or a public area. Winners can be voted on by other employees and the award ceremony can be included with other holiday activities.
2. **Go Outside.** One of the many perks about living in the Sunshine State is not having to worry about snow-heavy Decembers. Have your holiday celebrations or team-focused end-of-the-year activities outside. Do a Christmas beach day picnic; an outdoor/drive-in movie night; tour a brewery or winery; host an outdoor paint class; or complete an outdoor obstacle course (with beer afterwards). Whatever your outdoor activity, try to find a way to theme and connect it to your company's year overall and be sure to include special mentions from company leadership to tie it all together.
3. **Pair an outdoor activity with a drive-through holiday dinner party.** Let employees drive through different booths/stations offering gift bags, appetizers, hot cocoa, mocktails and more that they can grab from their car and enjoy along the way. You could also do this with a White

Elephant Gift Exchange or Secret Santa and follow it up with a virtual event where everyone opens their gifts together.

4. **Book at Food Truck or Cocktail Truck.** Rent a food truck or mobile bar to park in front of your office or at a local park or near the beach. Guests can get their fixes, and enjoy them while social distancing in an outdoor environment. Let your employees sign up for different shifts to ensure that social distance measures are easy to adhere to, with leadership being present at all shifts (thanks for this idea, Launch That!).
5. **Host an Olympic Game Competition:** Form teams for your very own office Olympics and host an outdoor Olympic games. Winter or summer, there is no bad time in Florida to rev up friendly competition with some athletic challenges. Create games that cater to a variety of athletic abilities with fun team names and prizes. Some ideas to get you started: ornament on a spoon relay race, corn hole and frisbee matches, plank challenge, and jump rope challenge. And don't forget about the opening and closing ceremonies.
6. **Conduct a through-the-years scavenger hunt:** Arrange small gifts and tokens from throughout the company's history – either virtually through pictures or physically through the office – like old photos, memorabilia, awards, cultural milestones and anything else that represents your company's journey. Attach a small clue to each item that brings them to the next. If you do it chronological order, it can help them reflect on the company's historic past, accomplishments, and what it took for it to get to this particular moment. It can reinforce culture and is a great way to connect employees of different tenures and backgrounds.
 - a. You can also do this in the form of a **Letter Chain** – where employees record memorable moments from the company's history (or this year) in the form of a letter and send it to a fellow employee. Track it and make sure it makes it way throughout the company and then you can compile all stories and create a memorable keepsake for everyone.
7. **Make a charitable contribution or volunteer in lieu of an office party:** Employees can find charitable giving motivational and exciting. You can create a gift drive, food drive or make it an activity where you paint walls together for older community members to brighten the holiday season and drive camaraderie throughout your team. You could treat your team to nice dinner out and then follow it up with serving others dinner at a soup kitchen.
8. **Do a virtual (or outdoor) wine/beer tasting.** Pick your favorite brewery or winery (or let employees choose) and send everyone goodies with tasting samples, cheese and fruit. Then jump on a company-wide Zoom call, where an enthusiastic expert walks you through the choices or consider turning it into a trivia holiday party (here are some [questions to get you started](#)). You could also have them try to guess the number of ornaments on the company tree or send them on a scavenger hunt through their coworker's home holiday scenes with this [iSpy Christmas game](#).
9. **Do a virtual celebration with a TV Game/Show Reenactment:** Assign pairs or groups to reenact memorable moments from their favorite TV shows. Set up a Zoom call for everyone to share and have a voting system available, with great prizes for the overall favorites.
10. **Connect throughout the holiday season with a video advent calendar.** Assign each employee a day to create a holiday-themed video to share with the company. Set up creative parameters and share ideas, let them get their families involved. It's a great way to connect deeper with employees during the holiday season.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/personal-social-activities.html>; <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html>; <https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/reviewedcom/2020/04/30/15-ways-still-celebrate-2020-graduation-friends-and-family/3058919001/>; <https://candlestyles.com/entertaining/8-creative-ways-to-celebrate-a-friends-birthday-while-social-distancing/>; <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/office-holiday-party-alternatives-1918051>; <https://queenofheartscatering.com/employee-appreciation-party-ideas/>; <https://sarabtheevents.com/2020/07/10/holiday-party-during-covid-19/>; <https://jshay.events/virtual-holiday-party-ideas-for-any-business/>; <https://www.thespruce.com/adult-christmas-party-games-1356271>; <https://teambuilding.com/blog/virtual-holiday-party>