

Party-time... best to zip your lips

Ah December...a time of mixed blessings – the end of the year is looming and with it a host of demands and mixed pleasures – including the workplace end-of-year celebrations.

Unlike other celebrations - though not unlike some pressures of the family Christmas - people are generally expected to attend the work Christmas party, so you may be in an environment with people you like and admire, but there will also be those who may have crossed or irritated you during the year.

It's all too easy, under the effects of one drink too many, to tell them exactly what you think of them.

So if you have some pent-up grievances, be careful not to let those demons out after you have had a few drinks. Once you let fly some unfortunate comments or actual insults in public it's very difficult to take them back.

So what makes a good Christmas party? It's one decided on by the workers rather than the management. Hopefully management has been sensitive to the needs of its staff when planning the celebration, and has made sure it's about a good setting and positive plan to balance food and alcohol.

The food on offer should take account of people's cultural or health sensitivities. A buffet of old fashioned hot dogs, party pies and crates of beer is not going to make non-drinking vegetarian colleagues feel welcome.

One of the great benefits of office end-of-year parties is the chance it gives you to meet people you don't have much time to chat with during the normal working day. Many friendships have been struck at the workplace Christmas party because people discover intriguing and attractive aspects of colleagues that were previously not known to them.

One of the biggest dangers at parties is the over-indulgence of alcohol. It can turn the mild, well-mannered and normally dignified into the opposite. And this applies to both men and women.

People need to look out for one another and make sure the lively dynamics don't lead in a downward spiral.

An essential consideration for a good workplace party is to work out ahead of time how you will get home. Don't push your luck. Organise the designated driver, book a taxi or take public transport. Road tragedy is a real concern at this time of year, so don't let your party contribute to the statistic.

With a little thought and preparation, everyone can have a great time and get home safely.

Survival tips

- **Watch your alcohol intake or it may lead you to lose your normal inhibitions and say things you may regret**
- **Look out for your colleagues who may be drinking too much or losing their sense of boundaries and good behaviour**
- **Think ahead to plan your transport home – drinking and driving is a passport to danger.**