



# The office party

These annual gatherings are legendary for derailing careers and leaving a hangover of regret and derision

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Wasn't that a party!

Sure was good while it lasted — and so was your career!

While the office holiday party offers the perfect chance to let loose with fellow colleagues, these annual gatherings are legendary for derailing careers and leaving a hangover of regret and derision.

Acting like it's a kegger will do you in. "Being that someone everyone remembers at the party can really tarnish your reputation and your brand," according to entrepreneur Aaron McDaniel, author of *The Young Professional's Guide to the Working World: Savvy Strategies to Get In, Get Ahead, and Rise to the Top* (CareerPress).

The Millennial generation is entering the workplace with a lack of party etiquette, he says. "Ideally, you want your peers, boss and other leaders across your company to think of the great work you do when they think of you — and not the stupid thing you did at a work event."

Big office blunders include not separating work from play, says McDaniel. When doing anything with colleagues, always employ the "boss litmus test": before doing anything, ask yourself, "Would I be okay with my boss knowing about this?"

If in doubt, do without — that extra drink, snarky comment or overt come-on.

It's a major mistake to assume no one is watching, stresses McDaniel. "Someone is always watching and news travels fast ... news of a scandalous action will spread like wildfire."

And a few too many does many in. "Besides acting like an idiot, you may say something you shouldn't, violating someone's trust or the confidentiality of something being worked on," says McDaniel. "The key is self-discipline and water. Have two glasses of water for every alcoholic drink you have."

How about making some party points instead? Build important relationships instead of destroying them. "People tend to have better working relationships with you when you get to know them on a personal level. Learn about what interests them and then ask questions."

According to McDaniel, this will make them like you more and lead to a higher likelihood that they will support your ideas. "People tend to

support people they like."

Getting points isn't just about what happens at the party, it's also about what happens afterwards. "Stay in touch with new contacts you make and continue to take interest in things they like. If they love a certain sports team, reach out to them when that team wins a big game. If they are all about the dance classes their kid is in, continue to take an interest in that."

Ultimately, the contact you make in another department may be your ticket to a new and even better job at your company, he adds.



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## TIMELY TIPS

Practise good party etiquette, with tips from Aaron McDaniel, millennial entrepreneur, author and speaker:

- Don't make university references: Focus in on fitting into a professional setting. Talking about university days shows your age, leaving the impression you're young and inexperienced, which may cause them to pass you over when opportunities arise.

- Act as if you are still in the office.

- Topics of discussion with colleagues should pass the "grandma test" — don't say anything you wouldn't be comfortable saying in front of your grandma.

- Don't talk work. From your co-workers to your boss to an executive at your company, use this time to learn about them personally.

- Watch someone else be the talk of the party: Gossip is an office pastime — don't be a source. And stay away from anyone who seems like they may be the next office party idiot.

- Have self-discipline: Control how much you drink and what you say and do.

## DAMAGE CONTROL

You're the talk of the party? Do damage control with tips from millennial expert Aaron McDaniel:

- Apologize immediately after the event, preferably face-to-face, to your boss and anyone else who may have been embarrassed by the situation. It is important to acknowledge your mistake, then move on.

- Don't make a big deal about it: "If you keep talking about what happened

over and over, even if it is apologetically, it let's what happened linger."

- Work even harder to get back to where you were in the minds of your boss and co-workers. Put in the extra effort to make up for your mistake.

- Don't do it again! Ensure self-discipline and think ahead next time. Twice is not nice — "it becomes part of your personal brand in a really bad way."

