



With the weather ramping up as we bask in the thrall of summer, it may seem too early to be thinking about carols, festive jumpers and chilly nights, but now is the prime time to start planning the office Christmas party. From this point in the year venues start taking more and more bookings. By waiting until autumn or even closer to Christmas to secure a space, one faces extra stress alongside the possibility of not being able to organise something in time or failing to secure the perfect venue, potentially leaving a business with something less than desirable on an awkward day of the week that employees are unimpressed with,



subverting the whole point of the event; a day or evening of fun and celebration to reward staff with.

While some businesses may be considering cutting Christmas parties to reduce expenses, there are many benefits to the annual events that outweigh the price per head. These are certainly appreciated by the UK businesses that collectively spend £1 billion on Christmas parties each year.

The Christmas party provides a great break for employees who are getting the winter blues. Long dark mornings and evenings prevail as employees work hard, and without something to look forward to a real lack of motivation can fill the office, stunting productivity. In addition many are distracted by thoughts of what gifts to buy their family and the logistics of Christmas Day. By arranging a Christmas party, to spread some joy, staff can be taken away from their desks for fun and relaxation. It is an event that acts as a refresher for employees. As, according to the University of Warwick, happy staff are 12 per cent more productive, throwing a Christmas party to boost morale can offer a real benefit in creating a more positive and, as a result, motivated workforce.

The Christmas party also acts as a key point in the year to show appreciation, a time to say thank you to employees for all their hard work, and it can be useful when monetary rewards are not an option. In fact, according to *Psychology Today*, 70 per cent of employees value appreciation for their work over a pay rise, and with this recognition staff are ready to work harder for a firm. Further, the Christmas party acts as a key job perk. As employees look for more from their employers, they can often be persuaded to choose another business that has better benefits. With 57 per cent of those looking for a new job stating benefits as one of their main considerations when applying somewhere, offering a fun activity like a Christmas party can be a good draw for new



staff and help boost loyalty with existing staff.

In addition, celebrating the Christmas festivities presents a chance for team building and boosting communication. Giving employees a chance to socialise and build relationships away from the office and out of the usual hierarchy helps to form a positive company culture, and results in better communication, smoother workflow at the office, and respect for other staff members' roles in a business. Employees who are able to build a friendly and personal relationship with one another are also more likely to share their workload when a high-pressure situation occurs and work better in a team together in comparison to staff

who are highly independent from one another. The party also presents a chance for workers that are rarely able to interact to come together, and for new hires to get to know more people in a casual environment. While many companies splash out on team building courses, the Christmas party presents a simpler and cheaper alternative to strengthen the bond between employees. We must also not forget to mention that festive parties have tax benefits as firms are able to spend £150 on each employee annually for entertainment tax free.

Many businesses are criticised for choosing a poor venue or using the same one repeatedly, so this year why not think outside of the box to foster a little more

excitement in the workplace - though remember to balance tastes of staff members. Perhaps talk to employees to collaborate on what everyone would want from their Christmas party in 2019. Yorkshire and Lincolnshire have a lot of venues and events to choose from, whatever your budget and staff size. From casinos to quiz nights, restaurants, hotels, historic buildings, wildlife parks, aquariums, and museums, all are ready to host Christmas gatherings. Whether you plan a relaxed Christmas dinner, or book your business onto a themed night with entertainment, as long as the party acts as a genuine thank you it is sure to be a hit. Though Christmas is not yet around the corner it's time to start planning.