

Capture the festive magic

YOUR GUIDE TO PLANNING FUN AND
INCLUSIVE YEAR-END CORPORATE EVENTS



85%
OF U.S.
COMPANIES HOST
HOLIDAY PARTIES

\$693/person
AVERAGE
U.S. HOLIDAY
PARTY COST

50%
OF U.S. HOLIDAY
PARTIES USE A
“FESTIVE” THEME

SOURCE: THE HR DIGEST

THE ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY IS A STORIED CUSTOM IN THE CORPORATE WORLD. IT'S A MOMENT TO COMMEMORATE THE YEAR'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS, BUILD TEAM CAMARADERIE, AND EXPRESS GRATITUDE TO STAFF.

However, pulling off a remarkable and successful holiday party requires meticulous planning and superb attention to detail. This FCM Meetings & Events guide is designed to equip corporate event planners with comprehensive advice on hosting an outstanding holiday party. We'll go over selecting the perfect venue, respecting diverse cultural identities and holidays, offering decoration and theme suggestions, sharing sustainability tips, and ensuring accessibility and inclusivity.

THIS IS WHERE
**holiday party logic
meets magic.**

LET'S GET STARTED!

Pick a venue to encapsulate the holiday season

Your venue sets the scene and tone for your event. Choose one that reflects your event goals, stays within budget, and is open to everyone.

KNOW WHAT YOU NEED

You'll want to start by defining the basic requirements for your event. Make sure to consider the number of attendees, the type of atmosphere you wish to create, and any specific needs such as audiovisual equipment, dining preferences, and space for entertainment. Drafting a detailed checklist can help streamline this process, ensuring you don't overlook any critical aspect. For example, if your event includes live entertainment, ensure the venue has the necessary sound systems and stage setup. An experienced meeting planner can help you manage all the finer details!

PICK AN APPROPRIATE LOCATION ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

When choosing a venue, prioritise a location that is convenient for the majority of your employees—review criteria such as proximity to public transportation and the availability of ample parking facilities. If your team includes remote workers or employees from different regions, it's important to select a venue that's near reasonable accommodation options. Safety is also a key consideration, especially if the event is expected to run late. Easy access and a secure environment significantly enhance attendees' comfort and enjoyment and will give you peace of mind.





MAKE SURE YOU KNOW WHAT THE VENUE INCLUDES

When scouting for potential venues, look for those offering flexible space options, in-house catering, and experienced event staff. Opting for a venue with a proven track record of hosting corporate events can be advantageous, as they will be more familiar with the specific needs and potential challenges. It's also worth checking if the venue provides additional amenities such as a coat check, Wi-Fi, and breakout rooms for more intimate gatherings or private conversations. These features and services can streamline your planning process and enhance the event experience.

AMP UP THE AMBIANCE AND AESTHETICS

The venue's vibe should align with the theme and tone of your holiday party. Make sure to visit potential venues at the same time of day as your event to get an accurate feel of the lighting and atmosphere and visualise your decorations within the space to help you make a more informed decision. If you have fabric swatches or smaller decorations you can carry, bring them with you to the venue to see if everything jives visually.

DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE

Don't be surprised that all your city's good holiday party venues are booked by July. On average, FCM Meetings & Events clients plan their holiday parties at least six months out, but many start a year early. This way, they have the time to get the best deals, secure the best venues, and figure out all of their group travel logistics.

KEEP THE HOLIDAY MAGIC WITHIN BUDGET

Finally, ensure the venue fits your budget while meeting all your essential criteria. Negotiating packages that include catering, decorations, and staff is often possible to get the best value. Always read the fine print of contracts to avoid hidden fees and ensure all agreed services are documented, including a cancellation and refund policy. And, more importantly, set aside a contingency budget for unexpected expenses. You never know what could happen next!

FCM Meetings & Events Example

A COMPLEX, MULTILOCATION EVENT FOR 1,800 ATTENDEES

CLIENT: A global cosmetics retailer

THEME: Baroque Chic

VENUES: The Carlu Toronto & Vancouver Commodore Ballroom

WHAT WE DID: Booked venues, sourced food and beverage, secured entertainment, oversaw décor and furniture, coordinated transportation, and managed registration.



Go beyond Christmas

Depending on where you are in the world, Christmas may be the dominant celebration. But don't neglect other holidays. Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and more fall during this time of year.

START WITH INCLUSIVITY

Begin your planning with an inclusive mindset; recognise that your workforce is diverse, with employees celebrating various holidays and cultural traditions. Create a welcoming environment where everyone feels honored and respected by conducting a survey or meeting with employee resource groups to understand their backgrounds better and determine your team's preferences.

MAXIMISE MULTICULTURAL ELEMENTS

Consider incorporating elements from different cultures into your holiday party. This could include decorations, music, and food that reflect the diverse backgrounds of your employees. A multicultural buffet with dishes from around the world can be a wonderful way to bridge any cultural or religious gaps. You can also include performances or activities, such as traditional dances or storytelling, to enrich the experience further. Make sure to hire vendors who are local to your venue and are members of the communities you're trying to reach.

ACKNOWLEDGE ALL HOLIDAYS

Beyond Christmas, recognise other significant holidays such as Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Diwali, and others relevant to your employees. Display symbols and decorations from these holidays and consider creating a calendar of events to acknowledge and celebrate them throughout the party. Acknowledging these holidays in speeches or presentations can also highlight your commitment to diversity. Activity stations that encourage exploration of these different holidays and religions can bring attendees together and foster conversation.

SCHEDULE EMPATHETICALLY

Be mindful of the dates you choose for your holiday party. Avoid scheduling it on or near major holidays that might conflict with your employees' celebrations. Additionally, consider holding the event during office hours to respect employees' time outside of work. Offering multiple time slots or staggered events can accommodate varying schedules and preferences. Also, certain holidays have longer observance periods that require things like fasting or staying home, so you'll want to make sure your party isn't during these times – you don't want anyone left out!

GET EVERYONE INVOLVED

Encourage employees to share their traditions and suggest ideas for the party. This not only makes the event more inclusive but also enriches the experience for everyone. Setting up a planning committee with representatives from different cultural backgrounds can ensure a more diverse and representative celebration. Providing opportunities for employees to showcase their cultures, such as through a cultural fashion show or a potluck, can also foster a sense of pride and inclusivity.

“Holiday parties and celebrations are a mainstay in the corporate event world. But that doesn't mean there aren't opportunities to improve, be more inclusive, and try new things. I love working with clients on exciting strategies to bring their teams together and celebrate everyone.”

KATIE TOTH

EVENT MANAGER, FCM MEETINGS & EVENTS
CVENT SUPERSTAR (2024)





Make the holiday spirit accessible to all

The holiday season is about celebrating together, so ensure everyone at your event feels welcome and included.

VENUE ACCESSIBILITY

Check that the venue is accessible to all employees, including those with disabilities. This includes ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms, ample seating, and space to accommodate mobility devices. Conduct a site visit with accessibility in mind, checking for potential barriers and ensuring compliance with legal accessibility standards.

DIETARY RESTRICTIONS

No one should go hungry at your holiday party! Cater to a variety of dietary needs, including vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, and allergy-friendly options, and clearly label all food items to help attendees make informed choices. Work closely with your caterer to ensure they understand and can accommodate specific dietary requirements. Certain nutritional requirements, such as kosher, mandate that certain types of foods be kept on separate surfaces, so doublecheck your food and beverage setup.



INCLUDE INCLUSIVE ACTIVITIES

Plan activities that everyone can participate in, regardless of physical or mental ability, and host games and entertainment that are inclusive and engaging for all attendees. Interactive stations, such as craft or cooking workshops, can provide alternative entertainment options that cater to different interests and abilities. For people who get overwhelmed by loud noises but still want to dance, organise a silent disco.

CREATE QUIET SPACES

Quiet spaces are essential for large events. It's a place for employees who may just need a break from the noise and activity, and it's particularly beneficial for those with sensory sensitivities or anxiety. Furnish the quiet space with comfortable seating, low lighting, and calming decor to create a soothing environment. And most importantly, set up the quiet room far enough away from the main celebration to avoid noise pollution.

ESTABLISH CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Not everyone consumes information the same. Use multiple channels to reach all employees, including email, intranet, text messages, push notifications, and printed notices. Providing information in multiple formats, such as large print or audio recordings, can ensure that everyone receives and understands the event details.

FCM Meetings & Events Example

A BUBBLY EVENT ACCOMPANIED BY A FULLY PRODUCED AWARDS CEREMONY

CLIENT: A global candy & confectionary company

THEME: Gilded Gold

VENUES: The Rainbow Room at the Rockefeller Center, New York City

WHAT WE DID: Booked venues, sourced food and beverage, secured an eight-piece band, oversaw décor and furniture including gold carpeting and a gold “living” statue that served champagne, coordinated bus transfers, hired photographers, scripted and produced the awards ceremony, designed the event website and promotional materials, and managed registration.



Seasonal sustainability tips

Evergreen trees don't need to be the only green aspect of your holiday party. Take some time to support our planet in between the celebrations!

BOOK SUSTAINABLE VENUES

Opt for venues with documented sustainability practices, such as energy-efficient lighting, waste reduction programmes, and ecofriendly catering options. Check if the venue has certifications or recognition for its sustainability efforts, like water conservation, energy management, and plastic waste. Venues with on-site recycling and composting facilities can significantly reduce the event's environmental impact.

USE ECO-FRIENDLY DECORATIONS

Use decorations made from sustainable materials like bamboo, recycled paper, and upcycled fabric. Avoid single-use plastics and non-recyclable items. Consider renting decorations to reduce waste. You can also repurpose existing office decor or ask employees to contribute homemade decorations as a fun team-building activity.

SUSTAINABLE CATERING CHOICES

Choose caterers who prioritise locally-sourced, organic, and seasonal ingredients. Offer a plant-based meal option to reduce the event's carbon footprint and ensure that leftover food is donated or composted. Providing reusable or biodegradable dishware and cutlery can further enhance the sustainability of your catering.

CHOOSE DIGITAL INVITATIONS

Sending digital invitations instead of paper ones reduces waste, allows for easy tracking of RSVPs, and reduces the event's overall environmental impact. Use event management software to streamline communication and updates, minimising the need for printed materials.

LEVERAGE GREEN TRANSPORTATION

Encourage attendees to use public transportation, carpool, or bike to the event. Provide information about public transit routes and offer incentives for carpooling. You can also arrange shuttle services from key locations to reduce the reliance on individual car travel.



Ideas for decorations and themes

Themes don't just curate the overall vibe of your event; they also help engage employees and inspire positive emotion. Here are some ideas to get the creative juices flowing!

CLASSIC WINTER WONDERLAND

Transform your venue with white, silver, and blue decorations. Use twinkle lights, snowflakes motifs, and frosted centerpieces to create a magical atmosphere. Incorporate elements like artificial snow and ice sculptures to enhance the winter theme. If you want to take it to the next level, include ice furniture or a truly frozen bar!

FESTIVE FAIRYTALE

Create a storybook setting with themes from popular fairytales. Decorate with elements like enchanted forests, castle backdrops, and mythical creatures. This theme can add a whimsical touch to your holiday party while staying agnostic. Consider having costumed characters or themed photo booths to make the experience more immersive and memorable.

CULTURAL FUSION

Celebrate the diversity of your workforce by incorporating decorations from different cultures. Use a blend of traditional holiday symbols from various religions and cultures to create a colorful and inclusive environment. Establish different stations within the venue, each dedicated to a different holiday, so attendees can engage with relevant decorations, music, and activities.



ECO-FRIENDLY GREENERY

An eco-friendly theme focuses on sustainability and natural elements. Use recycled or reusable decorations, such as potted plants instead of cut flowers, and ornaments made from sustainable materials. Incorporate live greenery and natural elements like wood and stone to enhance the eco-friendly vibe. You can also have DIY decoration stations where attendees can create their own ornaments from recycled materials or do rock painting. Consider an activity that gives back to the community as well!

RETRO HOLIDAY

A retro theme can evoke nostalgia and fun! Decorate with vintage holiday ornaments, classic holiday tunes, and retro-style food and drinks. This theme can be a delightful throwback for many attendees. Encourage employees to dress in retro outfits and set up a vintage photo booth with props from different eras for added fun.



Happy holiday parties for all

Planning a successful holiday party requires thoughtful consideration of your diverse workforce's needs and preferences. By selecting the right venue, honouring cultural identities, choosing thoughtful decorations and themes, prioritising sustainability, and ensuring accessibility and inclusivity, you can create a memorable and enjoyable event for all employees. However, for corporate events, these goals require an experienced partner who fosters a sense of community, appreciation, and celebration that resonates throughout the year.

THAT'S WHERE THE TEAM AT FCM MEETINGS & EVENTS CAN COME IN – WE'RE PREPARED TO SUPPORT YOU WITH YOUR HOLIDAY PARTY GOALS AND IDEAS, AND TO HELP YOU BRING YOUR VISION TO LIFE.





This is where worlds meet.



CONTACT US TODAY TO DISCOVER
HOW THE FCM MEETINGS & EVENTS
TEAM CAN TRANSFORM YOUR
CORPORATE EVENT STRATEGY.

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