

Tips to hosting a safe year-end function to boost employee morale

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The Covid-19 pandemic is still a grave concern for South Africa as the low vaccination rates across the country drives the threat of the fourth wave between November and January. This raises questions about how companies could plan for a year-end function and should they risk having events that could lead to a greater spread of the virus?



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While it may be in the best interest of everyone to forgo events that could act as super-spreaders, after nearly two tough years, it is understandable that companies may want to celebrate another year of ongoing commitment and boost employee morale with an end-of-year office party. If this is the case, it is important that companies have protocols in place to mitigate risks and protect their employees, after all, no one wants to celebrate the holiday season in isolation after the office party.

Practice Covid-19 safety protocols

With many people having worked remotely over the past year, the end-of-year party might be the first opportunity employees have had to see each other and socialise since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. With this in mind, employees may need reminding to practice Covid-19 safety protocols such as social distancing, wearing face masks and washing hands regularly.

Companies can help to ensure these measures are in place by providing employees with face masks and hand sanitiser upon arrival at the venue. It is also important that health checks are conducted such as taking of temperatures and symptom checks.

Move celebrations outdoors

South Africa's great weather at this time of year provides the perfect opportunity to move the celebrations outdoors. Not only is this a great way to increase the airflow and minimise the possible risk of contamination, but it will also allow employees to enjoy the outdoors.

As many employees have been cooped up inside their houses and will enjoy the beautiful, natural surroundings, soak up the sun and breathe in some fresh air. Not only will the change in scenery break the monotony of working in isolation, but it is also good for improving mental well-being.

Celebrate virtually

If the risk of a fourth Covid-19 wave sweeping across the country is a concern for you but you still want to encourage employees to have fun and socialise, you can move the celebrations online.

There are several tried and tested virtual events that could be considered and to spoil employees, you could arrange to have something delivered to each employee ahead of the virtual event. This could be a small gift or something that they need to bring along to the event. For example, you could arrange for a virtual cooking class and have ingredients delivered to the employee's homes ahead of the event.

Forgo the office party and help a community

While having an end-of-year event is a great way to encourage employees to socialise, enjoy some downtime, and make employees feel appreciated, your employees may prefer to forgo the office party to help others. At this time when many communities have been affected by the pandemic, experiencing the loss of family members and many people losing their source of income as companies have shut down due to the various lockdowns associated with the pandemic, you may want to put the year-end function budget towards helping others in the community.

Although companies may want to boost employee morale with an end-of-year celebration, giving back to the community has been proven to enhance mental well-being and happiness. Giving back to the community can be an inclusive effort where employees can provide recommendations for recipients of the donation, help pack gift boxes or even help to build homes within communities.

After another tough year, companies are faced with new challenges and trying to boost employee morale as the pandemic continues into its third year. There are several options available to encourage employees to reflect on the year that has passed and prepare for the New Year. Encouraging employees to take time to either celebrate amongst peers or give back to the community can provide the break that employees need to reconnect with others and boost their mental well-being and get them ready for the festive season.

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