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November/December 2017

for Business Leaders

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## How Workplaces Can Celebrate The Festive Season Without Breaking The Bank

No one will deny the corporate year is stressful, as Australians spend 40.7 hours a week at work on average nationwide, and that's not including the extra time spent in unpaid overtime staying back late, working through breaks, taking work home, working while in transit or answering emails out of hours. Workplace Christmas celebrations are an established custom in the corporate world, and serve as a reward to employees for the hard hours they log throughout the year. By **Jonathan Rowley**

**U**nless you're a cash-loaded Silicon Valley company, planning an end-of-year bash does require meticulous financial planning and budgeting. What I've, reassuringly, observed over the years is that companies don't necessarily have to break the bank to do something special for their staff.

Try these four effective suggestions for you and your colleagues to celebrate Christmas at work, have a fantastic time and balance out your cheque book.

### 1) Introduce a New Tradition

A Deloitte survey found that nearly 80 percent of executives rate employee experience as very important. Companies that have a positive culture also have a better chance of retaining their best talent.

Consider introducing a new tradition and make it a part of your company culture. At Order-In, for instance, my kids write cards and select gifts for my employees' kids. It really reiterates the importance of family and the spirit of "giving". I also like to give all my staff a box of sweet mangoes or cherries and a bottle of champagne every Christmas – it's quintessential Australian and the true taste of summer!

Think about your industry, brand identity and culture. What can you do at Christmas time with your employees that's enjoyable and great for the company social media profiles?

It doesn't have to be an expensive activity and this is where you can balance out your budget. Anything from a company movie night in the boardroom and a baked goods competition, to cookie decorating and the best handmade Christmas Card competition will do the trick.

The point of introducing a new tradition should always be to bring your employees closer together, with cash savings as the sideline benefit.

### 2) Volunteer For Charity

The core ethos of Christmas is kindness and thankfulness. The "giving" aspect of Christmas is heavily commercialised, but it wasn't always so. As a business, you can participate in the traditional spirit of "giving", and volunteer at a charity service. It costs you very little, only some time.

What's more, numerous surveys have found that most people say they would be happier in a job where they can make an impact.

You can approach a charity activity in one of two ways. My advice would be, and I have found this to work brilliantly in the past, is to choose a charity service relevant to your industry. The Order-In team, for example, participate in The Salvation Army Christmas Appeal every year.

### 3) Catered Office Christmas Party

Businesses may feel compelled to choose an expensive





venue or restaurant because that’s the norm. However, done smartly, the office can serve as an intimate and convenient option to host a celebration event. Don’t forget that the office can be social too!

This year consider staying in the office, decorate it to your satisfaction and use what you would have paid to a venue to order some delectable catering instead. The Order-In online portal allows you to choose from a range of caterers and there’s virtually no limit to how creative you can get. You could opt for the conventional Christmas barbeque by the beach or park with party games and entertainment for a festive atmosphere. If most of your staff members have kids, consider having a jumping castle or face painting booth.

We’ve found that keeping Christmas at the office can save your company a hefty bill without sacrificing the quality of the food or experience. The money you save can be channeled into buying gifts or awards for staff!

#### 4) Secret Santa

An oldie but a goodie, you absolutely cannot have Christmas at the office without a Secret Santa. It takes the pressure away from the gift purchasing process, and those who lack the funds to purchase gifts for their entire team will also be thankful for this exercise. No one likes to miss out, or for that matter exclude someone. Secret Santa ensures everyone gets a gift, and can participate in the popular ritual of gift opening.

#### HOW WILL YOU CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR?

As you review your company cheque book and plan Christmas activities, ensure this year’s finances align with your intended itinerary. Just remember to plan new lower key activities with three things in mind: company culture, your office space as an invaluable and free resource, and the real spirit of “giving” at Christmas. **BFM**

*Written by Jonathan Rowley, the Managing Director of Order-In. He is a pioneer of the food-tech industry, and regularly takes part in charity initiatives, including the CEO Sleepout, OzHarvest CEO Cookoff, and The Smith Family Challenge.*

