

The office Christmas party on Zoom – what to do and what not to do

[by Sarah Brooks, University of Sheffield](#)

Whether you look forward to the Christmas party or see it as a seasonal obligation, that time of year is here again. Restrictions on social interactions mean that workplaces are turning to virtual Christmas parties as the trend of working remotely in 2020 continues.



The party could be an opportunity – but don't go if you don't want to. [Girtis Ragelis / shutterstock](#)

The origins of the office Christmas party date back to Victorian times, with Charles Dickens and his tale of [Scrooge](#) encouraging employers to give food and days off to bring a little festive cheer. Nowadays, employers see office Christmas parties as an opportunity to improve employee morale, facilitate the development of relationships and increase staff engagement, all of which lead to [greater productivity](#) and staff retention.

However, it could be that organisations are more interested in throwing an office bash than employees are in [attending one](#). The risk of telling your manager that you don't want to attend could be interpreted that you're not a team player and that you aren't committed to the organisation. With the usual excuses like lack of transport and the absence of childcare difficult to feign, this year the Christmas party could be more difficult to avoid than ever. With that in mind, here are six tips which will help you think more positively about the

office Christmas Zoom party.

1. Network

Evidence shows that it's [very rare](#) to mix with new colleagues at an office party, but the new social norms of partying over Zoom – automatic “break out” rooms, for example – may just make this a bit more achievable. After all, sitting on Zoom for hours allows you to become familiar with faces that you wouldn't normally spend time with.

Make a list of relationships that could be beneficial for you to build. Successful careers are often based on [who you know](#), not what you know. The convenience of networking with senior managers over Zoom can be seen as an opportunity too good to miss. Despite the online platform, you could still find yourself talking to someone you're desperate to impress.

2. Set realistic expectations

The true essence of a Christmas party is that you get to spend time with like-minded individuals with gossip and conversations happening spontaneously in toilets or smoking areas. Unfortunately, it is difficult to create spontaneity and informality using Zoom because the main room affords no privacy and [simultaneous conversations](#) are near impossible.

Instead, expect that this year, organised fun is likely to be the name of the game. Take a look at the vast array of virtual experiences on offer ranging from magic shows to cooking, pottery and escape rooms and hope for the best. It could be that the Christmas party will not turn out to be the tedious event you imagined.

3. Embrace technology

It used to be that the [photocopying of body parts](#) was the height of technological misfortune in the office. Then we all went online and a plethora of videos went viral of online conference meetings gone wrong.

The use of technology to host a Christmas party will always come with an element of risk – make sure you are muted. This year, the risk might come from that obligatory shot of the Zoom main room with everyone's smiling faces shared on internal communications. Such images could be examined in detail by HR advisors and managers looking for evidence of organisational commitment.



Use the Zoom as an opportunity to network with people you normally wouldn't. [NadyaVetrova / Shutterstock](#)

4. Show the real you

Organisations have long talked about [authenticity](#) as the key to success. In fact, allowing people to be themselves at work has strong links to improved wellbeing. Seeing inside someone's home, becoming acquainted with their children, partners and pets has become the norm. It's an opportunity for everyone to show their "human side", create a level-playing field and talk to each other as real people.

For managers, it's an excellent opportunity to hear gossip, opinions and comments which you might not otherwise hear. For employees, it's an opportunity to test the water informally and take the opportunity to raise that concern you've had for a while.

5. Don't go if you really don't want to

Employees do [feel worried](#) about how their attitudes are perceived by managers, so you may feel unsure about telling your boss you don't want to attend. It's understandable if you are worried about being labelled a party pooper, or gossiped about behind your back. But, feeling you should attend rather than wanting to attend could impact negatively on your wellbeing. Approach the decision by weighing up the pros and cons of going and not going. Make sure you do what's right for you.

6. Keep it in perspective

Having a Christmas party to attend is a [good sign](#). Christmas parties can be viewed as a sign of organisational prosperity and in previous times of austerity, they have been cancelled or employees were asked to [pay for themselves](#).

With so many people on furlough, having been made [redundant](#) or facing financial hardship, having an office Christmas party is a sign that you're better off than some.

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