



# Planning Your Company Party

## Step-by-Step Advice

August 26, 2013 by [Meghan Townley](#)

It's that time of year again to start thinking about planning your next company party. Unsure how to make this year's party a success? Amy Lackovic, event production director at planitomaha, gives practical, step-by-step advice.

Where to start? Lackovic says to first consider the attendee experience. "Employees want to attend an event where they can be themselves," says Lackovic. "It is important to create an environment where they feel comfortable enough to open up to their peers and really get to know one another."

The next thing to consider is the budget because this will determine everything from the invites to the location. If your budget is tight, Lackovic suggests these steps to saving money: go with electronic invitations instead of print; use preferred vendors with discounts; reuse décor, florals, and linens from other events; eliminate labor costs by doing it yourself; control your event timing so you do not run into overages; and limit alcohol consumption.

Once you have the budget in place, start looking for the event space. "You should lock in your event space as soon as you can," says Lackovic. "Typically, you should lock in your space at least six months in advance." When finalizing the space, Lackovic recommends asking about cost and deposit, number of

people it can hold, catering options, AV options, location (easy for the majority of your attendees), and any limitations the venue may have.

“Employees want to attend an event where they can be themselves...where they feel comfortable enough to open up to their peers and really get to know one another.” – Amy Lakovic, event production director at planitomaha

Theresa Farrage, ballroom event specialist with Scouler Ballroom (which just underwent a complete renovation), suggests remembering two things when selecting a venue: your vision of the event and your guests. “You should definitely keep your big picture in mind but also don’t forget about the little details,” says Farrage.

Simple details that make a big difference may be included in the venue’s overall cost; just be sure to ask the key questions. “Is there a security guard on premise? Does the fee include table and chair rentals? You may think you’re getting a great deal, but once you factor in the cost of a few amenities that don’t come standard, you may be in for a big surprise,” says Farrage.

Farrage stresses booking your venue well in advance. “If you have your heart set on a venue, be flexible with your dates. Booking your event on a weeknight or during the off-season will often save you money.”

Once the venue is chosen, Lackovic breaks the event down by the remaining essentials: entertainment, decorations, personalization, menu, and gifts.

### **Entertainment**

“Revisit the question of ‘what do I want the attendee experience to be?’ If it is a more social and lively event, I would suggest a band, as they have the ability to strongly interact with the attendees. If it’s a networking event, I would suggest going with simple background music or even a DJ.”

“If you had an area to splurge on, definitely look into spending the extra dollars on entertainment,” says Lackovic. “The entertainment can make or break an event.”

### **Decorations**

“Adding lighting to your event can add a dramatic effect and ambiance. Adding some soft seating around the venue can also make the event feel more chic. Make sure you utilize everything the venue has to offer. Sometimes, your venue has in-house décor options included in the rental fee.”

### **Personalization**

“An easy and cost-effective way to show this is to have a personal note of gratitude from the employer or manager. Another avenue is to offer incentives in the everyday workplace, such as a ‘Jeans Day’ or a floating PTO day the month of their birthday.”

### **Gifts**

“It is not a necessity to provide a take-home gift, but it may leave a lasting impression on the attendee. You want to make sure that whatever item you decide to give away can actually be useful. We have seen people go toward more tech-savvy items such as branded cell phone power docks or USB drives. This

way, their gift will not only remind the attendee of the event or organization, but it will also make the person more inclined to keep the useful and unique gift.”

## **Menu**

“Within the past couple of years, the menu options have expanded quite a bit. People are much more health-conscious, so it is extremely important to plan ahead for those attendees who may be vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, etc.”

Jennifer Snow, owner/director of operations at Catering Creations, dishes on the latest ideas in food: “A current trend has been to take street foods, comfort foods, and bar foods and put an elegant and upscale twist on them...this makes the food fun and familiar for your guests and still gives them an opportunity to try new flavors.”

Some examples of comfort-food-turned-haute-cuisine are Gouda cheese-stuffed sliders or a French fry station with truffle aioli and caramelized onion ketchup. Another trend is to “bring out the kid” in your guests. “Everyone loves a classic sundae station with chocolate sauces and whipped cream—and don’t forget the sprinkles!” says Snow. “Or what about a pretzel cart traveling with assorted toppings like nacho cheese, honey mustard, or even chocolate sauce and chopped nuts?”

“We are currently working on our holiday menus to include customized caramelized popcorn stations with several varieties of sweet, salty, and savory popcorn mixes such as a Cajun caramelized popcorn with nuts and chocolate,” shares Snow.

“A current trend has been to take street foods, comfort foods, and bar foods and put an elegant and upscale twist on them.” – Jennifer Snow, owner/director of Catering Creations

Not every event needs shrimp cocktail. If your company is on a tight budget and you still want to include a nice seafood item, Snow suggests crab and shrimp cakes, which are still delicious but less expensive.

“It has also become trendy to use some of the less expensive meat options and add savory flavors and tenderness by slow braising them. This saves costs versus ordering beef filet,” says Snow.

“Coffee service isn’t always needed for a hot summer event but always plan on more coffee drinkers for events during the holidays,” says Snow. “Try throwing in a fun option like a specialty coffee and hot chocolate station to add condiments such as chocolate chips, caramel sauce, whipped cream, or peppermint sticks.”

There you have it—expert advice on how to make your company party one to remember. Now get to work!

Posted in: [B2B Magazine](#), [Business](#), [Entertainment](#)