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Holiday Business Party Etiquette

By Ann Golden Eglé, MCC

Early each January I meet with clients who are plagued by lapses of judgment they made during the Holidays, primarily business or networking events. Don't let this be you this year, or ever.

Below are the Etiquette School of New York's 'Top Ten Do's and Don'ts' to consider prior to walking into any social interaction this coming month.

DO's:

1. **Dress appropriately.** It is always better to play it safe and dress conservatively. This is your opportunity to make a great impression, or a leave lasting negative impression.
2. **Eat a small amount of food for energy before the event.** Rushing in and heading for the bar or the food is both noticed and counterproductive.
3. **Make an entrance.** When you walk in, take a few seconds to look around before circulating. It's important to make an effective entrance because everyone watches the entrance.
4. **Wear a name badge if everyone else is wearing one.** It goes on your right side.
5. **Keep your conversation positive and light when making small talk.** It's best to ask what the other person thinks about local events, national trends, books. Steer clear of controversy.
6. **Carry your beverage in your left hand.** This leaves your right hand free for handshakes.
7. **Drink alcohol in moderation.** Your true colors on a personal level are on display.
8. **Eat or talk.** Doing both at the same time is not suave.
9. **Be mindful of the person who accompanied you to the event.** If they're from your private life, they won't know your business colleagues. Introduce them to people with whom they might have something in common.
10. **Be discreet.** Don't discuss matters that belong at work a social business function.

DO NOTS

1. **Do not skip the corporate holiday party, or arrive when it is almost over.** You may think your attendance is optional, but your absence will be noticed.
2. **Do not bring your time-is-money business mind-set with you** even though the event is both business and social. Ask a question that needs more than a "yes" or "no" answer.
3. **Do not use business jargon at a social business event** unless you are talking shop with those who are enjoying it as much as you are. Otherwise, leave the buzz words at home.
4. **Do not bring a guest with you to the event unless the invitation specifically indicated that you could bring a guest.** If in doubt, ask the host if you may bring a guest.
5. **Do not let your ego take over,** particularly if you are a business executive, accustomed to commanding people's attention and experiencing their deference.
6. **Do not toast yourself.** If you are honored at the event with a toast, accept it gracefully. Don't drink to yourself or clap when others are applauding you.

7. **Do not talk solely with people you know well.** Make a point of meeting three new people. Try to find three things in common with each of them.
8. **Do not take pictures of your colleagues without asking for permission to do so.** Do not post them on Facebook without their consent. Be respectful of your colleagues' privacy.
9. **Do not answer your cell phone or text at the party unless it is an emergency.** If you must take a call, leave the room and go to a private place to talk.
10. **Do not forget to thank the host before leaving the party.** Write a thank-you note the day after the party; and follow-up with any contacts you have met at an event.

Armed with this guide, I hope you have a marvelous Holiday Season and are, at the same time, preparing yourself for a prosperous and highly successful 2015.

I wish each of you a very Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Kwanzaa and a phenomenally Happy New Year.

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