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WAYS TO ENSURE YOU GET THE MOST OUT OF A YEAR-END FUNCTION

1 PLAN AHEAD First things first: confirm the date, time, theme and size of the event. Also ensure that your event is aligned with company policies and values. With this information, you will be better informed on what type of venue and service providers you need. Venues and entertainers get booked very quickly for year-end functions, so start looking now, if you have not already. Compare at least three quotes to ensure you are getting the best value for money. Construct a to-do list that outlines what needs to be done, by whom and by when.

2 IT'S ABOUT THE STAFF Focus has to be on the employee. The event should be held during working hours so it does not infringe on family time. The event needs to be easy and convenient for your staff.

3 BUDGET Small expenses add up, so keep a budget and stick to it. Record expenses as you go along to ensure that you don't exceed the budget. If you are not working with a large budget, prioritise. Although embossed serviettes and party favours are nice to have

for any event, the catering and entertainment are what people remember and therefore demand more attention and budget.

4 PICK A THEME Themes are always fun but be sure to choose one that all guests will be comfortable with and avoid the overdone ones. Once an overall theme has been decided on, add little touches to make the event memorable, keeping the theme running throughout like a golden thread, but don't overdo it.

5 MOUTH-WATERING CUISINE Have an easy-eating menu, not a buffet – people shouldn't need to queue for food. If budget is an issue, rather opt for a simpler offering that can be served. Make sure to check dietary requirements with all the attendees so that everyone is catered for at the event.

6 KEEP THEM SAFE If you are serving alcohol, ensure that you provide safe travel options. Negotiate rates with a taxi agency, such as Uber (uber.com) or Avis M.I.C.E (avis.

co.za). In addition to this, ensure that you adhere to legal requirements regarding health and safety and playing music at the event.

7 MIX IT UP Ideally year-end functions are a time for a free-flowing environment that allows for a better personal interaction among staff. To avoid departments sticking together, ensure that the seating plan allows for interaction between people who would not generally interact with one another.

8 BE PERSONAL A small gift with a personal touch goes a long way. For example, give a can of coke with the employee's name on it, or a personally hand-written letter from the boss with a shopping voucher – these ideas are inexpensive yet effective.

9 CELEBRATE ACHIEVEMENTS Encourage your client to share company results and testimonials from people who have dealt with the company. This will let staff see the 'bigger picture' of how their work impacts on their company.