



**“We find the *BEST* and *SCREEN* out the rest!”**

October—December 2007



## The Do's and Don'ts of Gift Giving at Work

The holidays are quickly approaching, and that means it's time to start making your holiday gift lists. While finding the perfect gift for your Great Aunt Betty is always a challenge, some people get the most stressed out during the holidays trying to decide how to handle gift giving in the workplace. Do you give your boss a nice present? What's the best way to say thank you to your assistant? What about the person on the other side of your cube who gave you a year-old fruitcake last year?

Jodi R.R. Smith, president and founder of Mannersmith, an etiquette consulting firm, says the first rule of thumb in any gift giving situation is to think like the other person. "The trick to good gift giving is to find something that is appropriate based on the tastes, likes and dislikes of each particular person," she says. She offers the following dos and don'ts to help make your corporate holiday gift giving a breeze.

**DO check your company's policy on giving gifts.** "The first thing people need to do is check their workplace policy manual," says Smith. Many companies provide clear guidelines on what is and is not acceptable. Even if your company does have a policy, you should also ask others in your office, since employees do not always follow company policy carefully. If it is your first holiday season with the company, ask your co-workers how gift giving is handled and what the boss received from employees last year. This will keep you from being the "odd man out."

**DON'T be obvious about excluding people.** Smith says that if you are very close to a couple of people in the office and want to give them gifts, arrange a time for a gift exchange away from work. If, for example, you work closely with 10 people and only really like seven of them, do not give presents to only those seven, at least not in the office.

**DO suggest a group activity for your gift exchange, or in lieu of an exchange.** "Secret Swap" systems, where employees draw names and buy for one person, work well in many offices. If you want to get away from gifts all together, you can suggest that the whole team go out for a nice lunch, bring in baked goodies periodically leading up to the holidays, or have a potluck in the office one day. These ideas allow you to celebrate the holidays but help you avoid awkward situations.

**DO be careful about buying for your boss.** In general, Smith says she does not advocate giving gifts to bosses, as this can put pressure on employees and make it seem like the employees are trying to win favor. If you are a boss, she suggests being up front and letting employees know that you do not want to receive holiday gifts. This policy can help keep the playing field level for everyone in the office. If you do want to recognize your boss, try writing a nice thank you note or buy a thoughtful item that you know he or she can use. For example, Smith says she once realized that a senior executive she worked for never had an umbrella, so she bought that executive several small umbrellas to keep in the office.

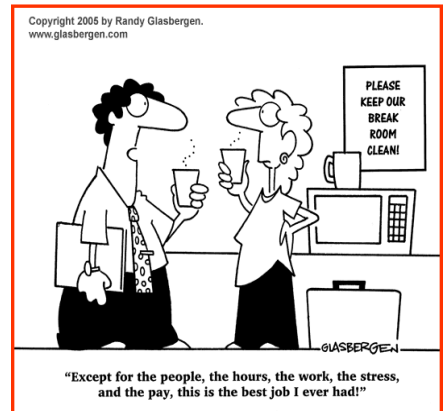
**DON'T give inappropriate gifts.** Appropriate gifts for co-workers include picture frames, personalized business card holders, professional pens, stationery, food baskets or fine chocolates. These choices work for a wide range of people. Smith suggests staying away from items like scented candles, body lotions or oils, lingerie and silk boxer shorts. "Anything you can also give your significant other is not something to give someone in the office," she says.

**DO think philanthropically.** Donations to charities are great ways to express your gratitude and cheer during the holidays, and charity donations are particularly good gift ideas for bosses. If you are going to go this route, make sure you find out what charity your gift recipient supports. You want to make sure it is meaningful to him or her. Working with a charity is another good idea for a group of employees. Instead of exchanging gifts, you and your co-workers could volunteer for a day at a soup kitchen or at another organization.

**DON'T give useless gifts if you are the boss.** "Small tokens of esteem from bosses to employees are always welcome," says Smith. "But employees tend to prefer bonuses and additional time off to a trinket."

Content courtesy of Kate Lorenz, Careerbuilder.com

## Just For Laughs



## DATES TO REMEMBER

### October

8—Columbus Day

31—Halloween



### November

6—Election Day

11—Veterans' Day

22—

Thanksgiving



### December

5—Hanukkah Begins

22—First Day of Winter

25—Christmas



# Absolute Don'ts in the Workplace

Ever think there's shady stuff goin' down in your office? Be thankful you don't work the Scranton, Penn., branch of Dunder-Mifflin. Jim Halpert kissing his co-worker, Pam Beesly, on Casino Night. Meredith Palmer downing numerous vodka-based drinks at work. Michael Scott spreading rumors (even though they were true) about Oscar Martinez's sexuality.

Smooching co-workers, consuming alcoholic beverages and spreading rumors about colleagues are all considered workplace taboos. Thirty-five percent of those surveyed have puckered up with a co-worker and 31 percent have tipped the bottle while on the job. Not to mention the 19 percent of workers who have spread a rumor about a fellow employee.

"As companies continue to embrace more casual environments, employees may develop a false sense of informality when it comes to the office behavior," says Rosemary Haefner, Vice President of Human Resources at CareerBuilder.com. "Employees should make sure they are aware of company policies, so something that initially seems 'harmless' doesn't end up negatively impacting a career."

Other workplace taboos that American workers have committed include:

- Falling asleep at work (42 percent)
- Stealing from the office (21 percent)
- Snooping after hours (17 percent)
- Lying about an academic background (4 percent)
- Taking credit for someone else's work (2 percent)

## Shameless industries

Certain industries reported engaging in office taboos more frequently than others. For instance, nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of government workers admit to having fallen asleep on the job compared to just 31 percent of all retail workers. Twenty-five percent of hospitality workers snooped around the office after hours compared to 15 percent of healthcare employees.

Check out how the following industries weighed in on these office taboos:

### 1. Falling asleep at work

When Michael F. was having trouble with his cable service, a technician came out to fix the problem. After waiting on the phone with the support team for over an hour to activate the new modem, the technician fell asleep -- on Michael's couch.

Forty-one percent of sales representatives have snoozed on the clock, along with over half (51 percent) of all information technology (IT) workers surveyed. Another 43 percent of healthcare and hospitality workers have dozed off at their desks, along with 41 percent of those employed in banking and finance.

### 2. Kissing a co-worker

The aforementioned kiss between Jim and Pam didn't fare well for their work relationship -- in fact, shortly after, Jim transferred offices completely. These two office lovebirds aren't the only ones guilty of this type of behavior. More than half (52 percent) of hospitality workers and 38 percent of all retail workers have smooched with a co-worker, according to the survey. Just 33 percent of education workers have puckered up compared to nearly half (47 percent) of IT workers.

### 3. Drinking alcohol on the job

In February 2007, CBS 2 News launched a hidden camera investigation that caught several construction workers drinking beer and whiskey on their lunch break before heading back to work. Despite safety issues and lack of concentration after drinking, startling percentages of workers have tipped the bottle on the job.

Sales representatives led the industries surveyed with 30 percent of workers admitting to knocking back a few at work. Twenty-six percent of banking and finance employees have drank on the job, along with just 12 percent of healthcare workers.

### 4. Stealing from the office

Anthony Z, 53, was recently arrested and imprisoned for stealing 5,937 Netflix DVDs and 1,497 Blockbuster DVDs from the mail when he worked as a U.S. postal worker. All industries surveyed admitted stealing from the office within five percent of each other, ranging from 21 percent of healthcare workers to 26 percent of education employees, with the exception of retail workers, who reported 15 percent.

### 5. Spreading rumors about a co-worker

Gossiping about co-workers is no minor offense -- in May 2007, four workers with 46 years of experience between them were fired for gossiping and starting rumors about a colleague and the town administrator.

Thirty-nine percent of government employees plead guilty of the same crime, according to the survey. Twenty-five percent of sales representatives have fed the rumor mill in their offices, while only 12 percent of IT workers have done so.

### 6. Snooping after hours

You name it, it's been done -- whether digging through someone's desk, sifting through discarded files and even logging onto co-worker's laptops. Bonnie R. nosed around a co-worker's background. She created a fictitious company to obtain information on someone she knew was fired by a law firm. She called the law firm's HR department and identified herself by saying, 'I'm with Quick Staff, a temporary staffing agency. I'm going over the application of Peggy Sue Smith. Peggy was quite candid with me over her recent firing so I'm just contacting you for a little background.'

"While I expected to obtain some information I was not prepared for the in-depth level of dishing this firm's top HR person then dished," Bonnie says.

Retail workers were least likely to snoop after hours according to the survey, with only 14 percent of employees having done so. Government employees led the industries with 26 percent of employees having poked around after hours

Contents courtesy of Rachel Zupke  
CareerBuilder.com

# Holiday Humor

Anyone who has ever worked in Human Resources knows the personal reward associated with making an employment offer to a candidate. It is hard to replace the joy of telling a potential employee that he or she has been chosen above all others. But for every offer we make, we also send out dozens of rejection letters knowing we have disappointed some good people.

Every so often though, there is that special someone you will always remember, even though they were rejected. With that in mind, we would like to share with you the letter below from the rejected applicant below.

Dear Lucy:

Thank you for your letter of September 26th. After careful consideration, I am unable to accept your refusal to offer me employment at this time. This year, I have been particularly fortunate in receiving an unusually large number of rejection letters. With such a varied and promising field of candidates, it is impossible for me to accept all refusals. Despite your company's outstanding qualifications and experience in rejecting applicants, I find that your rejection does not meet my needs at this time. Therefore, I will initiate employment with you company a week from this Monday.

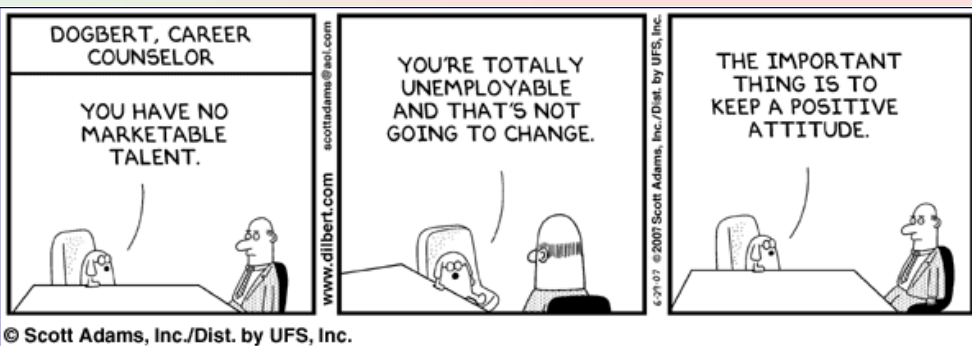
I look forward to working with you. Best of luck in rejecting future candidates.

Regards,

Michael



# More Holiday Humor



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