

TROJAN TODAY

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A NEWSLETTER FOR CLIENTS OF TROJAN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, INC.

Best Practices for Employer-Sponsored Events

by Rebecca Boartfield



Employer-sponsored events can be a great way to bond with staff and build teams: **the REWARDS.**

On the other hand, they can be fraught with potential legal issues and concerns: **the RISKS.**

Thus, the question becomes: to do or not to do? And if you “do,” where, when, how, and who?

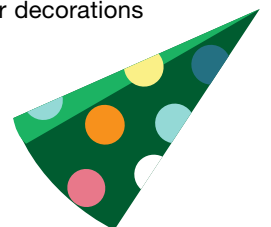
Although employees may be off the clock during the event, the employer may still be responsible for actions that occur during or after the event. Furthermore, depending on the event, it could result in discriminatory, harassment, and/or liability issues if not handled appropriately.

Holiday Parties

Several issues can materialize when it comes to holiday parties, beginning with the fact that the holiday you plan to recognize may not be one that your employees choose to celebrate. This is becoming more and more prevalent as the workforce becomes more diverse. Issues of religious discrimination and/or harassment can become a liability for the unsuspecting employer.

The best way to avoid allegations of discrimination is to refrain from using religious descriptions or decorations that represent a particular belief.

For example, consider calling the celebration a “Holiday Party” or “A Celebration of Seasons” rather than a “Christmas Party.”



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If your main intention is to reward employees for their hard work, consider celebrating during a different time of year. Summer BBQs or a day at an amusement park, for example, are great ways to show employee appreciation while avoiding religious connotations.

Alcohol poses another problem. When alcohol is available, the potential for negative employee issues increase. Although not serving alcohol would likely solve that problem, many employers still opt for cocktails.

Consider limiting the risks by utilizing the following tactics:

- **Accept cash only or tickets.** Require employees to pay for drinks. Have unlimited free non-alcohol beverages available for employees who don't drink and to encourage drinkers to save their money. Or, consider utilizing a drink-ticket system in which each employee is entitled to two drinks on the house, and no more.
- **Time it right.** Choose when to have alcohol available, either pre-dinner or during dinner only. If you do choose to have the bar open during the entire party, make sure it closes at least one hour before the party ends.
- **Choose alcohol and food wisely.** Beer and wine are better than hard liquor, given the relative alcohol content. Limit the amount of salty, greasy, or sweet foods because they tend to increase thirst.
- **Invite families and/or clients and vendors.** The presence of family members or other work-related colleagues can encourage employees to be on their best behavior.

Although you have the best intentions for limiting alcohol consumption, there is still the chance employees may get out of hand with their behavior or be too impaired to drive.

Here's how to prevent those situations from happening:

1. Designate person(s) to monitor employees' behavior. Items to look for include: how much employees drink and whether they have a safe ride home; employee interactions, especially those who become "too friendly" with each other or if tempers rise; and any other employee activities that may be dangerous to themselves and others.
2. Cover all transportation bases by:
 - Arranging for a taxi or car service for employees.
 - Asking employees to designate a driver ahead of time, such as a family member, to take them to and from the party if they plan to drink.
 - Suggesting that employees carpool with each other so that those who drink can ride with those who don't. Just be careful employees don't think this is a requirement.

3. It's safe to assume some employees will start the party on their own before they arrive at the actual party, so to minimize that possibility:

- Impose a rule that employees who arrive drunk will not be admitted to the party, and announce that a pre-designated driver (an employee-volunteer or a taxi) will take the intoxicated employee home.
- If the party is after work, arrange for free transportation from your practice's site to the party site and back, so employees don't have the chance to hit happy hour beforehand.
- Remind employees about your company's office alcohol and substance abuse policy and the rules regarding behavior, public intoxication, fighting, harassment, etc., and reiterate it will be enforced at the party. These reminders can be done via e-mails or memos a few days before the party. Trying to explain this to an employee who is already drunk when he/she shows up to the party will not work.

Other Employer-Sponsored Events

Many employers sponsor outside activities to enhance teambuilding. For example, employers have sponsored ski trips, picnics, theater events, softball games, or exotic trips to places like Hawaii. While they can bolster morale and enhance working relationships, the employer could be on the hook for liability if something bad happens in the course of the activity.

The key word here is "sponsor." If an employee gets hurt, either while traveling or during such an event, the injury is likely to be considered work-related and reported as such to your workers' comp carrier.

Here are some examples:

- If alcohol is consumed during the event, and alcohol is ruled to be the cause of an accident, it is likely the employer would be held responsible.
- If an employee who had been drinking falls and twists his/her foot on the way to the restroom and cannot work for 4 weeks, you may be forced to bear the cost of medical treatment, plus salary for the lost work time, through your workers' compensation carrier.
- If an employee was involved in a car accident on the way home from a company sponsored event and was severely injured and totally disabled, the workers' comp carrier could be paying for a lifetime of total disability, which would significantly affect your insurance premiums.



As you can see, an employer may be held liable for any accidents or injuries resulting from such events. There are many ways to minimize your risk. For example, eliminate alcohol, and inform employees that attendance is completely voluntary and free from any expressed or implied pressure from management.

Employee Compensation

Staff is often intimately involved in planning the details of the party. If staff participates either in planning the party or acting as helpers and hosts during the party, whether during or outside normal work hours, that time is considered paid time. Even if staff is willing to do so voluntarily, the labor department will consider their time as work-related and therefore paid time.

Furthermore, if participants who attend the event are either required to attend or are led to believe their performance standings would be damaged by non-attendance, then compensation is required. Be sure to inform those who are attending the event that they are doing so voluntarily and will not be paid unless they are performing assigned duties.

Harassment Complaints

In some unfortunate cases, the good intentions of the employer-sponsored event are significantly dampened when the employer receives a sexual harassment complaint after the event occurred. The employee, in these cases, wants to hold the employer responsible and, all too often, the employer will be held accountable.

The following should help reduce exposure to these claims:

- Remind employees about general standards of conduct.
- Re-issue the company policy on anti-harassment and have everyone sign an acknowledgment of receipt.
- Clearly outline consequences that will be taken if behavior is unacceptable.
- Encourage appropriate behavior to ensure everyone has a good time, and lead by example.
- Do not serve alcohol or minimize the amount served. Inappropriate behavior is more of a potential when alcohol is involved.

If you do receive a complaint of harassment, take it seriously and act immediately. It will not benefit you to ignore the complaint and pretend it didn't happen or isn't your problem. An employer always has an obligation to keep employees safe and free from unacceptable behavior, even when it's an after work, off-site event.

In Conclusion

Remember this is an employer-sponsored event.

Any social setting may reduce inhibitions and relax a sense of professional behavior. Unfortunately, in today's litigious climate, employers need to take certain precautions to avoid any embarrassing, or possibly very costly, consequences.



Q: We have a Perio Maintenance patient who has had SRP in the past but prefers to alternate the code with a regular cleaning to “save money.” We informed him we cannot alternate it since he is a Perio Maintenance patient, and we have to bill for that treatment. However, when we called the insurance company to verify whether we can alternate between the two codes as the patient requested, insurance company said that it was fine, even if patient previously had the SRP.

A: The definition of D4910 – Perio Maintenance states this is “for the life of the dentition after the treatment of periodontal therapy.” You are legally responsible to submit payment to the insurance companies for exactly what you have completed.

Q: What are the laws and regulations on updating a patient's medical history? How often do we need to do it and what information is required?

A: The Board of Dentistry in California says you must get a new medical history every year. Every six months, you need to ask about any updates or changes. If the patient has any updates or changes, the patient needs to complete a new medical history.

Responses provided by [Debra Seidel-Bitke](#).



Rebecca Boartfield is a Human Resources and Employment Compliance Consultant with Bent Ericksen & Associates, a national Human Resources and Employment Compliance Consulting firm. An HR professional for more than fifteen years, Rebecca's specialty is employment compliance and human resources management. **FMI:** rebecca@bentericksen.com, 541-685-9003, or www.bentericksen.com.

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Quote-Worthy

“ Technology can be our best friend, and technology can also be the biggest party pooper of our lives. It interrupts our own story, interrupts our ability to have a thought or a daydream, to imagine something wonderful, because we’re too busy bridging the walk from the cafeteria back to the office on the cellphone. ”

— Steven Spielberg



Service Savvy

Is your office making changes to your practice computers or Practice Management software?

If your office is planning to:

- Upgrade your Practice Management System to a new version,
 - Upgrade any workstations or the main server, or
 - Convert to a new/different Practice Management System than what you are currently using in the office,
- please contact Trojan's Software Support Department.

Depending on your current or new Practice Management System, specific programs may need to be installed.

PLEASE NOTE: The Henry Schein (*Dentrix, Easy Dental* software) and Patterson (*Eaglesoft*) products do require a reinstallation of the Trojan integration. This software is not provided by Trojan; please contact your vendor for assistance.

PLEASE NOTE: If using Dentrix and the office upgrades to G6.2 or higher, you will need to obtain the Dentrix Trojan 6.1 install files from Dentrix Support first, before Trojan can load our benefit plans.


Other Trojan programs that may require reinstallation:

- Trojan Benefit Service Program
- Trojan Managed Care program
- Trojan Communicator
- Trojan Eligibility Program
- Trojan Dr Direct (Electronic Claims)
- Trojan Express Collect

If you have questions, or need assistance, please call Trojan Software Support Department at 800-451-9723 ext. 1. You can also send an email to request support at: softwaresupport@trojanonline.com. Software Support is available from 6am – 4pm PST, M-F.

If your IT company is needed for any type of reinstallation, please feel free to provide them with the number to Software Support. Our representatives are more than happy to speak with them.

FUN! Fact



Queen Elizabeth I had to have **all her teeth removed**, apparently because of her love for sweets.

Once they were removed, the queen refused to appear in public without padding her mouth with wads of cotton to maintain a more normal, younger-looking, face.



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Automated Eligibility

800-451-9723 ext. 3



Meeting Place

OCTOBER 3, 2018

AADOM Chapter Meeting
Costa Mesa, CA

[Click here for more information.](#)



Seminars

Insurance Extravaganza

Presented by Christine Taxin

OCTOBER 4-5, 2018

Las Vegas, NV

[Click here for more information.](#)

Front Office Rocks

Presented by Laura Hatch

DECEMBER 7, 2018

Dallas, TX

[Click here for more information or visit:
frontofficerocks.com](#)

What Clients Say



"We love Trojan's Dentifi program.

The staff support is awesome, always on the ready to help with any questions. The program helps you to be accountable to yourself and every patient, no matter what insurance they have. Dentifi helps you to become more confident when explaining to the patient their portion due when having treatment done. Also, Dentifi allows you more time to concentrate on your patient reactivation rather than focusing on insurance verification. P.S. It's affordable too."

— **Deborah**, Office Manager

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Share your dental and front office experience with others! Articles should be no more than 750 words. Include a short bio and recent photo.

Submit to: nikkim@trojanonline.com

Trojan encourages a wide variety of contributors and subjects to its newsletter.



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