



GETTING INTO THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT

'Tis the season to be jolly, and *Modern Aesthetics*[®] magazine asked our practice management pros to weigh in on gifting options for staff, how to maximize holiday promotions, and holiday party etiquette.

WITH WENDY LEWIS; ALLYSON AVILA, JD; JAY A. SHORR, BA, MBM-C, CAC XIV; AND MARA SHORR, BS, CAC XIV



UNDERSTAND YOUR OPTIONS

There are various types of holiday rewards to consider:

Cash

If you do want to monetarily compensate your employees, make sure you list it as a line item on their payroll so that it is properly taxed as income. Don't violate any IRS regulations. According to the IRS, bonuses of money and/or gift cards (considered a monetary equivalent) are considered taxable income and must be reported. They should be included on the employees' W-2.

Gifts

If you give small gifts, make sure they are meaningful to the employee. As far as taxation, some small gifts are considered de minimis and aren't taxable.

PTO

Paid time off is a wonderful perk and allows employees to spend extra time with their friends and family. The compensation is taxed as regular pay.

Holiday Party

Have the party off-site as this is an even better time to also hand out the holiday gifts and awards. Ensure that alcohol does not spoil the fun and that loose lips do not sink ships. We want all of our team members back in 2023.

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GET ON THE GIFTING CIRCUIT STAT

Christmas cards and snow globes are starting to appear earlier and earlier each year. This year I spotted candy canes and Santa hats even before Halloween.

Get into the holiday spirit early to promote your treatments, products, and giftables by following what Amazon and every other mega-retailer do. The key days that play a significant role in making consumers want to buy are Black Friday, Cyber Monday, as well as all the plethora of winter sales that start right after Christmas Day, and then comes Valentine's Day.

List signature packages in local gift guides. These are very common in all markets as media and influencers like to do a roundup of the best gifts to buy for the season. Reach out to some local media to learn what they are looking to promote.

The best kind of offers are increasingly more personalized. For example, digital gift cards are available for almost anything consumers want to buy, so that is a great strategy to incorporate into your holiday promotions. You can create gift cards for specific valuations that can be used for anything you offer vs. individualized gift cards that can only be applied to specific treatments or products. Consider excluding some treatments and products from gift cards, such as those that have lower profit margins, high consumables, or take up too much staff time.

One caveat is that in many states gift cards have no expiration date, so you may get someone coming in 3 years from now saying, "I want to use my gift card for my lip injections." Check out the regulations that apply in advance to avoid any surprises down the road.

Look to your top vendors for any special holiday gifts they will be promoting. For example, many cosmeceu-

tical brands offer special holiday skin-care bundles that are in a pretty box or holiday packaging to save you from having to do the wrapping internally.

Share your holiday gift recommendations with your patients via e-blasts and text messaging to get the word out. Position your practice as a great place to go for some of the season's most wanted gifts. You can also have a selection highlighted for workplace gifting, such as a best-selling sun care product for the ubiquitous Secret Santa. Most aesthetic practices can easily put together an edited range of ideas that would be suitable for bosses and co-workers alike. After all, who wouldn't be happy to get a luxurious facial or massage as a gift during the most stressful time of the year?

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DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN

Holiday parties can be a magnet for sexual and other harassment claims. Oftentimes, the parties are off-site, and alcohol is flowing freely. Employers and employees often let their guards down and do not have policies in place that protect against inappropriate conduct.

When holiday parties take place off-site, many employees fail to remember that it is still a work event and that workplace behaviors should apply to any off-site work function. When you add alcohol to the mix, there can be disastrous results.

It's not only the employee who is

the harasser that can be held liable. Employers can also be held liable (1) if they have failed to take steps to prevent discrimination and harassment, (2) if they know or should know about the conduct and fail to put a stop promptly and sufficiently to the conduct, or (3) if/when the harassment is done by an owner, officer, director, manager, or supervisor.

Employers must ensure that they provide notice to all staff—no matter their position in the company—that the sexual harassment and other harassment policies of the employer remain in effect at any holiday party or other social gathering of the staff. It is a good idea to also limit the amount of alcohol that is served and, at least one hour before the end of the party, the bar should be closed. There should be a plan in place for transportation in case an employee has overindulged in alcohol.

With diversity, equity, and inclusion being a paramount concern today, employees should not feel pressured to attend a holiday party if they do not celebrate during that time of the year. Employees should not face repercussions if they choose not to attend.

Finally, any type of gift exchange during the holidays should be carefully monitored. Any sexual type of gift or gender-related gift should be avoided at all costs. There should be a clear policy as to what type of gifts may be exchanged. Off-colored jokes and paraphernalia must be avoided.

The holidays are a time to celebrate and show appreciation toward one another. Many offending circumstances can be avoided if an employer sets forth clear and concise policies and expectations both in and out of the workplace during work events. ■

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