

A Strategic Look

Axiom
Human Resource Solutions

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Upcoming Trainings

October 11: [Employee Perspectives](#)
October 25: [New Releases](#)
November 8: [401\(k\)](#)

For Access to previously recorded trainings, [click here](#).

Axiom Updates

- We're hosting another social media contest! This time—for charity. Stay Tuned!
- Missed a recent training? Check out our [YouTube](#) channel to catch up!
- We know you love our newsletter updates, we think you'll love our social media even more! Stay in the know by following us on [Twitter!](#)

Happy Fall Y'all! 🍁

Sweater weather and pumpkin spice aren't the only things that come with fall! Axiom wants to make sure you are ready with all that is to come in Q4!

- **Open Enrollment:** If you are having open enrollment soon, its best to prepare your employees sooner than later! Having a solid enrollment process eliminates confusion amongst employees and delays in enrollment. If you haven't already, check out Kelly's [blog](#) on Open Enrollment best practices!
- **ACA Reporting:** Its time to start auditing your employees for correct reporting! If you do your ACA filing through Axiom, now is a great time to start combing through your ACA reports to ensure you are on track for a smooth reporting process. If you need assistance in accessing these reports, please contact HR@axiomhrs.com.
- **W2s:** The number one question we get calls about during W2 season is, "What address did my W2 get mailed to?" Get ahead of the game by sending out a mass email to all employees requesting any address changes to avoid delays in filing and frustrations. We can even do this directly from the system, if you'd like! Reach out to HR@axiomhrs.com for details!
- **Handbooks:** It is our recommendation that you review your handbook on a yearly basis to make changes and updates and have employees re-sign your acknowledgement. Your handbook should be looked at as your Golden Guide to managing your company. It is important to add new information and revisit existing information based on management experiences throughout the year. Axiom is happy to review your handbook with you and customize to your company's needs. Contact HR@axiomhrs.com for questions and inquiries!

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Minimize Your Risk: Holiday Party Q&A

With Kelly Mead

As we head into Autumn it won't be long before holiday party season is in full swing. The holidays are a great time of year to celebrate companywide achievements and show appreciation for your employees. While it's great for everyone to unwind and enjoy one another's company, holiday parties can be risky for employers who are not careful.

Q: Our company would like to have a Halloween party but some employees have said it is against their religion to celebrate Halloween. How do we handle this?

A: By associating any office party with a specific holiday, companies will likely unintentionally alienate certain employees, potentially resulting in a religious discrimination claim. Not all cultures or religions celebrate the same holidays. In December alone, there are at least 14 holidays observed by various cultures and religions. Avoid claims of religious discrimination by making parties non-denominational and making attendance voluntary.

Q: Do we have to pay our employees for attending our holiday party?

A: In regard to nonexempt employees, it depends on whether or not the employee is required to attend. Holiday parties that are scheduled during regular working hours will almost always be compensable. Parties held after-hours or on weekends for which attendance is voluntary do not require compensation. There can be gray areas between mandatory and voluntary, especially if not attending is frowned upon. Another gray area is whether or not to pay employees who are attending the party but working at the event or helping with preparation. If employees are expected to attend, even if unspoken or they are working at your party, we recommend paying them in order to avoid wage claims.

Q: Are we permitted to serve alcohol at company-sponsored holiday parties?

A: Yes, it is permissible for companies to serve alcohol at holiday parties but there can be a host of risks involved. Serving alcohol can result in sexual harassment claims, violence, employee DUIs, underage drinking and more. If you are going to serve alcohol, give out drink tickets to minimize overindulgence and arrange and pay for transportation home for any employee not fit to drive home.

Q: If an employee is injured during a work party/outing is the company liable?

A: In most cases, a company-sponsored party will be considered a work function. While laws vary by state, there is a high probability that the company will have at least some liability depending on the situation. We recommend consulting with your insurance professional so they can evaluate the specifics and determine if you have the proper insurance coverage.

Q: Can we put a Christmas tree in our office without discriminating against employees who do not celebrate Christmas?

A: Certain decorations associated with holidays have been deemed by U.S. courts to be "secular" symbols that don't require religious accommodations when in public work spaces. Items such as Christmas trees, wreaths, reindeer and elves are considered to be secular whereas nativity scenes are considered to be religious symbols.

Here are some tips to help you make it through the holiday season without incident:

- Don't exclude anyone or force participation,
- Embrace and welcome diversity and input from all employees,
- Remind employees of company policies on discrimination and harassment,
- Communicate to managers and executives that they set the tone at company-sponsored events,
- Limit alcohol consumption,
- If parties involve costumes, be sure they meet company dress code guidelines,
- Ensure everyone makes it home safely,
- Consider alternatives to a night-time party, and
- Clearly communicate behavior expectations.

This information which is summarized is general in nature and is not intended to constitute legal advice. If you need an HR consultation specific to your circumstances, contact Kelly Mead, Director of Human Resource Services at 317-587-1019.