

Virtual summer parties: The six mistakes you don't want to make

The office summer party is a staple in the annual business calendar, allowing colleagues to bond and employers a chance to recognize and acknowledge their teams' achievements. However, summer parties are going to look a little different this year.

Since lockdown, Just Eat for Business has been using its newly launched 'Pantry Packages' delivery service to help businesses plan and activate their summer parties. Based on the trends it has seen, they share the biggest mistakes businesses are making when it comes to organising their virtual get-together.

MISTAKE 1: Not setting a theme: You need your summer party to feel different from a company meeting or all-hands, and landing on a creative theme will help structure the flow of the event. Don't feel like you need to relate the theme back to what your business does either. Some of the best ideas we've seen are when people think outside the box; from a Rodeo Hoedown to a three-course virtual dinner party. You can then pair decorations, food, music and activities to that theme, and even ask employees to dress up for the occasion.

MISTAKE 2: Doing a quiz: Let's face it, we're all a bit sick of them by now.

Recycled questions and people using their phones to look up answers. There are so many ways to build on the quiz format and make it a little different. Why not try turning your quiz into a virtual game show, or challenging people to a talent contest, digital karaoke or even a virtual cook-off.

MISTAKE 3: Not personalising the experience: We've seen a real trend for bespoke packages, and it's a sure-fire way to show employees that you've gone above and beyond at a time when working together can be challenging. From personalised invitations to bespoke three-course menus and even branded decorations, there are loads of ways to bring your business' personality into your event, and they don't need to cost the earth.

MISTAKE 4: Keeping people chained to their screens: Whilst it might seem counter-productive, giving people something to do at home that doesn't involve being on a video call will make them feel more involved. We've seen a huge rise in orders for DIY cooking kits, from pizzas to cupcakes, giving people the chance to step away from their laptop, cook something in their kitchen and rejoin the party to share the results with their colleagues.

MISTAKE 5: Sticking together: One of the great things about the summer party is building relationships with colleagues you don't normally work with. On a video call, you can end up either just giving a series of speeches, or letting those with the loudest voices own the conversation. Try splitting people into random small groups of about five, give them an activity to work on together and encourage them to come back and share with the whole group. Not only will people connect with colleagues they don't usually work with, but it will give everyone a role in the event.

MISTAKE 6: Making it too long: Your virtual office party doesn't have to be as long as a normal work party – in fact, it really shouldn't be. Videocall burnout is a real issue but it can be minimised by setting out clear start and end times. Keep your office party short and sweet; one fun activity, some mouth-watering food and drink and a little bit of chit-chat to finish – make sure to end on a positive and light-hearted note.

“Although many employees remain at home in different parts of the UK, and in some cases, in different countries, the office summer party is still a great

opportunity to engage and reward teams for their hard work – particularly when the past few months have been so tough for so many. What’s more, a virtual event can prove much more cost-effective, which will be important for many businesses at the moment” said Tom Squire from Just Eat for Business.

“Undoubtedly Zoom will have an important role to play, however, one problem we’re seeing across the board is a lack of engagement on this channel, and lots of people have become somewhat ‘quizzed out’ over the past few months. But there are so many other ways to get creative,” he added.

Just Eat for Business is the UK’s leading office food delivery marketplace, and when offices closed, it launched Pantry Packages – enabling companies to send gifts, lunches and drinks straight to their employee’s homes across the UK.

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