

# 1

## Learn and re-learn your company handbook.

Holiday parties are a staple for many companies, with many of these being offsite. The eggnog is likely to flow, and employees can make poor career decisions at these types of functions. Be sure your employees are familiar with the do's and don'ts at all company functions and review them yourself. One of the last documents we read regularly is the employee handbook, but it's never bad to review it for holiday season.

# 2

## Do Christmas parties discriminate against different religions?

In a diverse workplace, many people celebrate the holidays in different ways. Holding an event labeled as a "Christmas party" may not coincide with everyone's beliefs. At most establishments, these events are within religious policies and are a company bonding technique. However, employers should focus on following their religious policy to the letter in these scenarios.

# 3

## Handle vacation requests carefully during the Christmas period.

It's a common workplace strategy to double down on vacation time around the holidays. Many managers run into a scenario where multiple employees request the same period of days off. Do you play good cop or bad cop? Well, that's up to you, but by law, workers must give notice equal to twice the length of the holiday they wish to take. In other words, if the employee is asking for two days off, they must put in their vacation request four days in advance. However, it's always preferred that departments sit down and talk about their vacation requests ahead of time, so there is a reduction of conflict. It's inevitable that staffing will be low during these times, but it's possible to have a well-constructed plan and understanding of handling schedules.

# 4

## Are employers required to give their employees bank holidays off?

Companies are not forced to give time off during bank or government holidays. Also, contrary to popular belief, companies are not forced to pay workers extra for holiday work. However, these are policies you need to be very clear on when hiring an employee. This is something that could come up in meetings with your team, so have your answer prepared and a policy that backs up your stance.

# 5

## Can a Christian refuse to work a Christian holiday?

Employers must understand their obligations outlined in the Equality Act 2010, which is to protect workers against direct and indirect discrimination because of their religion. In the previous section, we mentioned that bank holidays are not required off, but if a religious element is thrown in, it can change the conversation. A refusal to give a noted Christian Christmas off can be ruled indirect religious discrimination. In other words, it's wise to award religious holidays off for those who make the request. Be sure to touch up on your company's holiday policies as much as possible before the holiday season rolls around for your own security!