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**I'm planning my company party, but one concern is that somebody might get drunk and have a car accident. Got any advice on protecting myself?**

▶ Concerns about liability for alcohol-related incidents, sexual harassment, and workers' compensation claims have led many companies to forgo holiday galas entirely. You don't have to. But if you're really afraid, lawyer Anil Khosla, writing in Inc. Magazine, suggests the following steps to reduce



your liability: **1.** To distance the business from the party, make it an entirely social event, don't invite clients or vendors, and make sure employees know that attendance is voluntary. **2.** Plan accordingly. Hold your gathering off-site, if possible. That may shift some of the potential liability to the hotel, restaurant, or caterer. If you must have an on-site party, hire an independent caterer. Don't permit anyone from the company to serve alcohol, and instruct bartenders to stop serving anyone who seems inebriated. Lawyers advise avoiding an open bar— or,

at the very least, limiting it to the first hour. Also, close the bar at least one hour before the party ends. **3.** Consider providing transportation to and from the event. Make sure that cabs will be available, and appoint someone to suggest cab rides home for people who have had a few too many."

**How do I tease out a prospective hire's innate strengths during the interview process?**

▶ The indirect method is often best when it comes to getting at a prospect's true strengths. Marcus Buckingham, a leader of the strengths-based school of business management, suggests asking this question: What was the best day at work you've had in the past three months? "Find out what the person was doing and why he or she enjoyed it so much," he says, adding it's key to keep in mind that a strength is not merely something someone is good at. "It might be something they aren't good at yet. It might be just a predilection, something they find so intrinsically satisfying that they look forward to doing it again and again and getting better at it over time." The theory is that the best businesses are those that fully leverage the strengths of their employees as opposed to trying to fix up their weaknesses.

# HELP YOUR HOLIDAY HABITS

Hold these four sales meetings prior to the holiday selling season.

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On Sales



**F**rom December 1st to the 24th, closing ratios double and impulse sales skyrocket. The problem? It's too easy. Salespeople tend to slip into lackadaisical sales practices because the sales happen either way. Unfortunately, this endangers repeat business and could even cost you holiday sales.

To prevent this from occurring, hold sales meetings over the next four weeks and address each of these topics in turn.

**1. STORE FLOOR AWARENESS:**

Emphasize that your team must know what's happening at all times with all clients. There's an old wives' tale that whoever is closest to the door is the greeter; not true. If you're near the close, you're not going to turn away to greet a new customer. That means someone else needs to be ready. Has the client been greeted? Does a salesperson need an assist? Is the client about to walk away? Teach your team how to recognize and react to these situations.

**2. WOWING ALL CUSTOMERS:**

Salespeople say they are too busy to do this, and that everyone has what they want already. Wrong. This is the time of year that impulse buys greatly increase. All you have to say is, "Guess what's in the vault?" or "Guess what just came in?" Let the rest take care of itself. Show your team how to "wow" every customer and emphasize just how critical it is.

**3. CLOSING:** Clients want you to close. At Christmas time, no one is just looking; everyone is just buying. Learn to profes-

sionally create a sense of urgency, but always be honest. You can say:  
→ "We only have one of these left."  
→ "These have been really popular this year."  
→ "We can't get any more of these until after Christmas"  
→ "She's going to love it; you should do this."  
→ "We sell this item faster than we can get it in."  
→ "You're going to be a hero; she won't believe you did this."

If it's on December 24th, you can even say, "We close in 10 minutes. There's not another place you can go and just look; this is it!"



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**4. ADD-ONS:** Too many salespeople spin and walk to the point-of-sale after the first item is sold. When you do this, you tell the client they're done. Instead, purchase some beautiful, small sharp scissors. From now on, once you've sold an item, take out your scissors, cut the tag off and lay it on the counter pad. That says you've sold

the item, but you can continue selling. The average Christmas buyer buys 15-20 gifts, and the average salesperson sells just one. Instead, after the first item is sold, say one of these add-on lines:

→ "This is part of a set."  
→ "We have what matches."  
→ "I gotta show you what goes with this because she's gonna love it."  
→ "How many others are on your list?"

These are called lead-in lines because they lead into the next presentation. The average add-on takes 30 seconds because you don't have to sell; they're already sold.

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