



# advantage

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# advantage

## THE CHANGES CONTINUE....FFCRA and OSHA

As we near the end of the year, it is common to recap all our accomplishments and plan for the coming year. I think most, if not all of us, can say 2020 was not what we expected. In some cases, the unforeseen of 2020 brought new business opportunities, or showed how things could be done differently. For others, it brought furlough and work share, staff reductions, or even organization closure. Regardless of the impact seen in 2020, the changes will continue. As the uncertainty associated with COVID-19 continues related to federal legislation, vaccine, school supervision for minors, and a host of other related topics, there are a couple things you need to keep your eyes on.

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), which brought us the Emergency Paid Sick Leave and Emergency Paid Family and Medical Leave provisions, is scheduled to sunset on December 31st, 2020. These provisions have provided both leave and pay for individuals impacted through various COVID-19 related instances. While the Federal Legislature has been working on an additional stimulus package, called the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act (HEROES), there is no guarantee that this will come to fruition or what the details of the final Act will include. Your organization needs to plan for and communicate this scheduled sunset. This includes informing employees of the change in leave and pay potential. Simply put they need time to plan. A special note for those of you in Oregon: The Oregon Family Leave Act (OFLA) provides protected leave, not pay, for individuals who need to care for a child due to the closure of daycare or school under the Sick Child provision.

We also want you to keep your eye on your state specific OSHA requirements. For those of you with Oregon locations, OR-OSHA COVID-19 rules have additional work that must be accomplished prior to the end of 2020. This work includes two separate plans which require documentation and employee participation in the development activities. Organizations also have the responsibility to train every employee based on the timing of the rules. Again, before the end of 2020. We anticipate the Oregon rules are among the first of many states that will issue rules. HR Answers is hosting a series of workshop to help you in this endeavor.

[CLICK HERE TO SEE MORE.](#)

2021 will be here before we know it and with the new year will come new opportunity. Please remember this may change our path, but not good HR practice. Act in good faith, be consistent, and document. And remember, we are only a phone call or email away. Let us know how we can help.

## A NEW PRESIDENT....NEW THINGS FOR THE WORKPLACE

It is after the election and more than 160 million Americans voted and have returned to work either physically or virtually. We are a diverse population who hold different viewpoints and our emotions may get the best of us based on our hope for the outcome.

Our “workplaces” are likely to be the first outlet for pent-up emotions, lingering bitterness and even resentments. Organizations may experience employees’ feelings of anxiety, fear, anger, and frustration and this is not something for supervisors to ignore.

There are some things we can do. The [new report](#) by the Dialogue Project is based on a year-long research effort and offers advice on how to help employees engage in productive discourse. The project’s purpose: to explore how business leaders can contribute to improve civil discourse and reduce polarization in our society.

An example of doing it right is the [Better Arguments Project](#) which is a national civic initiative launched by the Aspen Institute in conjunction with Allstate and Facing History and Ourselves, a global education program. Participants gather in cities to hear speakers on a controversial topic and then move into smaller groups. Before starting the conversation, they pledge to respect five core principles of productive discussion: 1) take winning off the table; 2) be present and listen to learn; 3) connect and respect; 4) be honest and welcome honesty from others; and 5) make space for new ideas and room to transform. These are wonderful and could be applied to virtually all organizations.

Employers should aim for outcomes where employees can engage in a dialogue about important issues, whether in person or electronically, while remaining productive, respectful of others’ points of view, and aware of key discrimination and labor laws. Taking this approach should better ensure the creation of realistic workplace social conditions and maintain employee morale.

- Take the opportunity to communicate your specific policy or other guidelines to employees, including by:
  - Ensuring that your expectations are clear, including that you expect employees to act in a civil and respectful manner towards each other at all times.
  - Identifying any issues that are “off-limits”; particularly those that may cause a conflict of interest with the business.
  - Making appropriate references to handbook conduct policies, including policies regarding anti-discrimination/harassment, complaint reporting, non-solicitation/distribution and social media and electronic use policies. Employees should also understand that they may be subject to discipline for failing to meet your standards of conduct regarding political discourse.
  - Remind employees that the rules are not different just because they are working from home and communicating electronically. In fact, it’s even more important to engage in civil and respectful discourse when expression and tone are harder to discern over electronic means.
- Train your managers on how to **interrupt conversations** that may be problematic and put the focus back on business. They should emphasize productivity and business concerns rather than the nature of the speech unless it is serious.

Here are several recommendations, drawn from Dialogue Project research, that can help managers and leaders navigate the challenges of a protracted post-election-day conflict:

- Do not remain silent — communicate. The election and its aftermath will be the elephant in the room. It will need to be addressed.

- Acknowledge the difficulty. The most effective initiatives on civil discourse begin with an admission that these conversations may be difficult. Acknowledge that people feel passionately about these issues, and that it can sometimes be difficult to rein in that passion or for someone to hear contrasting views that they believe differ not only on policy but on core values.
- Listen actively. Each person has a responsibility to be an active listener and respectful of others. It's important to remind people to speak from their own experiences and not to speak for others or for an entire group.
- Model desired behavior. Remember that in times of stress employees carefully watch the words and actions of leaders. Even the casual banter that often precedes in-person or virtual meetings will be scrutinized. Leaders finding themselves in passionate discussions should speak briefly, resist the desire to interrupt, share the conversation time equitably, and emphasize areas of common ground.
- Show leadership through empathy. The day after the election, and likely, for some days after that, will be a time to showcase the softer skills of leadership. Empathize with the challenge we all may face to keep our cool as post-election conflict escalates to its climax.
- Resist the temptation to be the office pundit. Social media and cable news have turned us all into amateur pundits. But holding forth at work with your own predictions and analysis, tempting as the daily drama may make it, will lead others to make inferences about you that may be unhelpful and raise, rather than lower, the political temperature. This may be difficult to avoid entirely if you are in a business that may be significantly affected by the outcome of the election or by the uncertainty itself. But it should be minimized by leaders at all levels.
- Reiterate core values. Depending on how the situation plays out, and especially if there is any kind of civil unrest, it may also be helpful to reiterate company policies regarding harassment, bullying, and so on, and remind people of the importance of not allowing political differences to become disruptive or poison working relationships.

## WHAT IS GOOD DOCUMENTATION?

Documentation serves a number of purposes in an organization that range from fulfilling recordkeeping requirements to providing an organization with information necessary for desirable outcomes related to efficiency, improvements, and productivity. It can also serve as a means to correct employee behavior or facilitate the separation process but may incriminate an employer who fails to do this in a fair, consistent, and compliant manner.

Most organizations believe they are well aware of what documentation they have and why they have it, why it is designed the way it is or collects certain information, what shortcomings are present, or why certain outside documentation is requested from employees. It never hurts, however, to review the following guidelines to ensure that these angles have been considered and your organization is meeting the mark.

Good documentation is:

1) Objective and Accurate

***Forms that an organization generates which are designed to record employee information and performance, etc., should record facts and behavior or a rating or classification based solely upon***

**those factors.** Accounts of behavior captured must be factual, not subjective, and supported by more than one organizational representative, when possible. To support that goal, careful language should be crafted to elicit only objective and accurate information on various organizational documentation. Inaccurate information should be corrected or updated if found to be so, although documentation in personnel files containing such information should not automatically be removed or destroyed.

2) Complete and Consistent

Do inconsistencies appear in the information that is collected about employees? And is this same incomplete documentation associated with how employees are treated on a daily basis and/or with employment-related decisions down the road (this is likely not obvious to you if it is happening)? **Ensure that documentation is completed in a consistent fashion for all employees or that certain items are excluded for entire job groups in a non-discriminatory fashion.** For example, omitting travel preference questions from paperwork for office-based personnel is acceptable; asking only management-level employees, all of whom happen to be white, for preferred names is a concerning inconsistency. Another example of a concerning inconsistency is where only some employees are asked on performance evaluation forms about goals and desired growth in the organization, leading to differences in consideration for promotional opportunities.

3) Composed of Purposeful, Appropriate, & Relevant Content

**Necessary information and desirable information are present and discriminatory content is not.**

It is a best practice to periodically review government-generated data collection documents and pertinent regulations, especially if you have adapted one of them for company use (e.g., protected family and medical leave request forms), to ensure that the needed information, and only that, is being collected. Medical information, etc., or other information about an individual's protected characteristics should not be collected on standard forms, and when such information is obtained indirectly (e.g., an emergency contact form that provides information about marital status, gender/sex of the partner, etc.), it is best practice to keep it separate from other personnel documentation.

Personnel selection is an area where discriminatory language may often unintentionally appear on organizational documents. Do managers' recruiting and interview notes state personal characteristics or opinions about applicants related to a protected classification? An example would be a note that a candidate seemed to lack "energy and enthusiasm," and this was likely because it was an "older" interviewee. HR should be carefully reviewing this information during the selection process to ensure that any potential issues are promptly identified and addressed. In another scenario, illegal information may be unknowingly collected after recent changes in multiple states which occurred at different times. For example, an employer with a presence in all West Coast states might have branches in Spokane and San Mateo with employment applications that request prior salary information. Organizations must stay abreast of these changes and ensure they are uniformly implemented across the organization (geographically and with all personnel) to ensure that all organizational documents are current. An effective approach in this situation may be to update applications for all states when the first change occurs in one location, as long as such a change doesn't run afoul of other requirements.

Lastly, personal or irrelevant information collected should be kept to a minimum and in most cases, excluded entirely from main personnel files, kept separately, and destroyed after it fulfills its purpose for the organization (team building activity, introductory exercise, etc.). If personal information is requested that is not job- or employment-related, it should always be optional for an employee to complete this documentation and a written request should state this.

4) Concise/Of A Manageable Length

***Too much documentation can hurt you.*** When HR or management needs to locate information about an employee quickly, having a manageable amount of documentation to thumb through (physically or electronically) is important. Organization, of course, contributes to this as well. Think about an employee personnel file request placed by a 20-year employee who desires a copy of the file, not just a viewing. Less time will be lost in complying with the employee's request and any applicable requirement to provide this information. Another benefit to consider is that the more information you collect, the more likely it is you may collect something that may work against you or which contains something inappropriate about an employee. An example would be a journalistic article about an employee, kept in the main personnel file, which reveals that the employee battled against and survived domestic violence.

5) Consistent in Terms of What External Documentation is Collected

***You may have compliant forms and documentation practices to collect personnel information, but are they being utilized correctly?*** If you require a birth certificate from new parents for parental leave, do you request this of all employees, without regard to sex or gender? When requests for a medical accommodation are made of a similar nature, do all employees have to provide certification from a healthcare provider, or just the newer staff that aren't known as well to management to be truthful and reliable? Even if there isn't an obvious difference of that kind, it's a good idea to ensure that managers and HR staff are cognizant of the need for this type of consistency and should periodically review their practices and interactions with staff.

6) Stored & Handled Securely

***Good documentation is securely stored and handled in a manner that prevents the discovery of its contents by unauthorized personnel.*** Typically, in larger organizations, personnel information is housed in locked cabinets in a centralized HR department. When sensitive documentation must be stored in another fashion or if satellite locations have "working files," ensure such documentation is appropriately secured, at all times. Locking file cabinets and/or a locked storage location or password protection for electronic files are the obvious steps. Ensuring that a request process and chain of custody is in place to track where any confidential documents go, as well as training personnel who receive or generate these documents on how to safeguard personnel information temporarily in their custody is also paramount. Personnel files or other sensitive documents should never be left out on a desk or open on a screen where they might be easily accessed and viewed. ***A confidential document's steward should never have to wonder who has borrowed it.***

Want to hear more? Join us on December 2nd for a one-hour conversation as part of our free HR Lunch Bunch Series. You can [click here](#) for registration information. For any questions about your documentation practices, we've got the answer. And if you have concerns, you may consider addressing this as part of an HR Audit; another service in which we specialize.

## THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT – HRA LIST OF 35

In honor of Veterans' Day this month we thought we would share Military Leader Quotes any manager can learn from. We believe as you read through them, we can all learn from and apply in any situation where we are leading or managing others. We are grateful for everyone who serves and we honor the over 1.8 million who have died serving the United States since 1775.

"It doesn't take a hero to order men into battle. It takes a hero to be one of those men who goes into battle."  
– *General Norman Schwarzkopf, U.S. Army*

"If there is not the war, you don't get the great general; if there is not a great occasion, you don't get a great statesman; if Lincoln had lived in a time of peace, no one would have known his name."  
– *Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the United States & former Army Colonel*

"Whether a soldier on a battlefield, a staff member meeting with customers, or an engineer building a key component, those doing the front-line work have valuable insights."  
– *Colin Powell*

"When I am getting ready to reason with a man, I spend one-third of my time thinking about myself and what I am going to say and two-thirds about him and what he is going to say."  
– *Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States*

"No man has ever listened himself out of a job."  
– *Calvin Coolidge, 30th President of the United States*

"Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."  
– *Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th President of the United States, and former General of the Army*

"A general is just as good or just as bad as the troops under his command make him."  
– *General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur*

"There's likely a place in paradise for people who tried hard, but what really matters is succeeding. If that requires you to change, that's your mission."  
– *General Stanley McChrystal, U.S. Army Retired*

"Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity."  
– *General George S. Patton, U.S. Army*



“The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things.”

– *Ronald Reagan, 40th President of the United States,*

“It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit.”

– *Harry S Truman, 33rd President of the United States, and former Colonel in the U.S. Army*

“All of the real heroes are not storybook combat fighters either. Every single man in this Army play a vital role. Don’t ever let up. Don’t ever think that your job is unimportant. Every man has a job to do and he must do it. Every man is a vital link in the great chain.”

– *General George S. Patton, U.S. Army*

“The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people.”

– *Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the United States, and former U.S. Army Colonel*

“To get the best out of your men, they must feel that you are their real leader and must know that they can depend upon you.”

– *General of the Armies John J. Pershing, U.S. Army*

“Because the crew was convinced that I was “on their team” there were never any issues with negative criticism... You as a mentor have to establish that you are sincerely interested in the problems of the person you are mentoring.”

– *Ret. Capt L. David Marquet, US Navy*

“Always do everything you ask of those you command.”

– *General George S. Patton, U.S. Army*

” The truth of the matter is that you always know the right thing to do. The hard part is doing it.”

– *General Norman Schwarzkopf, U.S. Army*

“A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent.”

– *General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur*

“The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office.”

– *Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th President of the United States, and former General of the Army*

” Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without the strategy.”

– *General Norman Schwarzkopf, U.S. Army*

“Age wrinkles the body. Quitting wrinkles the soul.”

– *General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur*



“Those who dare to fail miserably can achieve greatly.”

– *John F. Kennedy, 35th President of the United States, and former Navy Lieutenant*

” The harder the conflict, the greater the triumph.”

– *George Washington, 1st President of the United States, and Commanding General of the Continental Army*

“The truly great leader overcomes all difficulties, and campaigns and battles are nothing but a long series of difficulties to be overcome. The lack of equipment, the lack of food, the lack of this or that are only excuses; the real leader displays his quality in his triumphs over adversity, however great it may be.”

– *General of the Army George C Marshall, and former Secretary of State & Secretary of Defense*

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.”

– *Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of England during World War II, and former commander in the British Army*

“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.”

– *Colin Powell, former U.S. General, Secretary of State, and National Security Advisor*

“Mountaintops inspire leaders, but valleys mature them.”

– *Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of England during World War II, and former commander in the British Army*

“To err is nature, to rectify error is glory.”

– *George Washington, 1st President of the United States, and Commanding General of the Continental Army*

” Preparedness is the key to success and victory.”

– *General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur*

“In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.”

– *Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th President of the United States, and former General of the Army*

“The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war.”

– *General Norman Schwarzkopf, U.S. Army*

“It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is hell.”

– *Major General William T. Sherman, U.S. Army*

“Any soldier worth his salt should be antiwar. And still there are things worth fighting for.”

– *General Norman Schwarzkopf, U.S. Army*

"Without heroes, we are all plain people, and don't know how far we can go."

- *Bernard Malamud*

"War may sometimes be a necessary evil. But no matter how necessary, it is always an evil, never a good. We will not learn how to live together in peace by killing each other's children." - *Jimmy Carter*

## HRA CALENDAR

Open your Daytimers, Outlook, and all those Smartphones. The following is a look at upcoming events and workshops, special days, and other diverse and fun activities you will want to be aware of and schedule. To register for our workshops, go to [HR Answers Events](#) or click on the event below.

**NOVEMBER:** National Eye Donation, Adoption Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month, Diabetes, Entrepreneurship, Gratitude, Native American Heritage, Peanut Butter Lovers Month.

Nov. 9-15	World Kindness Week
Nov. 14-22	National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week
Nov. 16	Day for Tolerance

<b>Nov. 17</b>	<b>HRA Webinar: Self-Awareness through DiSC</b> 8:30am to 12:30pm <a href="#">Register Here</a>
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<b>Nov. 18</b>	<b>HRA Webinar: COVID-OSHA New Rules</b> 9:00am to 10:30am <a href="#">Register Here</a>
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<b>Nov. 19</b>	<b>HRA Webinar: Pay Equity</b> 9:00am to 10:30am <a href="#">Register Here</a>
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Nov. 19	Great American Smoke out
Nov. 20	Future Teachers of America

<b>Nov. 20</b>	<b>HRA Webinar: COVID-OSHA New Rules</b> 9:00am to 10:30am <a href="#">Register Here</a>
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Nov. 26	Thanksgiving Day – HR Answers Closed
Nov. 27	HR Answers Closed
Nov. 28	National French Toast Day

**COMING UP:**

<b>Dec. 2</b>	<b>HR Lunch Bunch: What is Good Documentation?</b> 12:00pm to 1:00pm <a href="#">Register Here</a>
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<b>Dec. 4</b>	<b>HRA Webinar: Preparing for the New Year</b> 9:00am to 10:30am <a href="#">Register Here</a>
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**Dec. 10**                      **HRA Webinar: Effective Use of Corrective Action in a Union Environment**  
 9:00am to 11:00am  
[Register Here](#)

**Dec. 10**                      **Job Search Workshop**  
 11:00am to 1:00pm  
[Register Here](#)

**LOOKING AHEAD:**

**Jan 26 to Mar 16**        **Success for Beginning Supervisors (a series)**  
 8:30am to 12:30pm on Tuesdays  
[Register Here](#)

**HR Q&A**

**Q: We are updating our company intranet and looking to see what we should include on our HR page. Do you have some suggestions for us?**

**A:** A well-planned, well-built intranet can deliver value to employees and employers. The HR section of your intranet can accomplish many things. It can help an organization set the stage for employees, talking about the culture, reinforce mission statement and core values. We recommend benefit information, employee handbook, policies, and forms. Perhaps toolkits for different types of roles or responsibilities like managers, employees, temps, etc. You could have an employee newsletter or announcement section. Many organizations post the payroll schedule, holidays, employee birthdays and anniversaries, along with job vacancies and recruiting and onboard materials. From a training standpoint you could have upcoming training events as well as a portal for employees to track their training participation/completion.

**HR BY THE NUMBERS**

A 2016 study (which is the most recent) by the American Psychological Association found that political discussions in the workplace resulted in 28% of younger workers feeling stressed, 23% of all workers feeling more isolated, 25% experiencing increased hostility in the workplace, and 27% experiencing at least one negative outcome. We encourage you to check in with your employees during this 2020 election period.

\*\*\*\*

The Dialog Project survey of 5,000 individuals found these results too. In the United States, the survey found key issues include politics, race relations, and gun control. More than 70% of the 1,000 American respondents said it is hard for them to talk about those topics with people who may hold opposing views. Some 82% of Americans surveyed also said that people should be more respectful in civic conversations. Yet 50% also said “not me” when asked if they’d be willing to invest more time in pursuing such engagement. Only 25% of survey respondents said they had willingly discussed hot-button issues with a person likely to have a different viewpoint.

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Pulse Surveys are a good deal! According to HR Today, 90% of workers are more likely to stay at a company that acts on feedback.

\*\*\*\*

According to Predictive Index, 41% of Analytical Reference Profiles are finding fewer opportunities to collaborate since working remotely.

\*\*\*\*

[Trust](#) is the foundation of any good relationship, including between employer and employee, and it's growing in importance. [A recent Edelman Trust Barometer study](#) concluded that, "trust has changed profoundly in the past year—people have shifted their trust to the relationships within their control, most notably their employers." Employees also said they wanted their employers to lead in time of change. Seventy-one percent of employees said it was "critically important for my CEO to respond to challenging times," and 76% said they wanted CEOs to take the lead on change.

\*\*\*\*

Although academic qualifications are still a major point of consideration, strong work ethic, grit, and talent are equally as important. Wiley Education Services and Future Workplace found that [53% of companies](#) would hire someone with some college coursework but no degree, and 52% would hire someone without any college experience but with industry certification. Companies are turning to bootcamps, internships, and apprenticeships to find non-traditional candidates, and so should you. A LinkedIn Trends report found that [91% of companies cited soft skills as an issue](#) and 80% of organizations are struggling to find better soft skills in the market. **Coming Soon:** A soft skills training series will be offered by HRA in 2021.

## CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAYS 2020 STYLE

Though you and your colleagues may not be able to gather in the same space this year, you can still embrace the holiday spirit and spread good cheer no matter your holiday of choice by filling your virtual party with appropriate decorations and activities. The best advice for making a virtual holiday event fun is to include interactive activities. We have collected a list of ideas from a variety of sources to share with you.

### 1. Virtual Holiday Scavenger Hunt

Virtual scavenger hunts are fun and active ways to spend time on a Zoom call. The length of the activity depends on how many items you want them to find. This type of activity builds engagement and excitement and will help carry the energy for the remainder of your event. The best items to hunt for also have a story or a "show and tell" element.

Here is a short list to get you started:

- Favorite gift of all time
- The item you have owned the longest
- Your winter coat
- A holiday photo
- Some festive decoration

To play, list the item and whomever brings the item back first gets a point or set of points. You could also award extra points if that person shares more about the object.

## 2. Cheery Holiday Playlists

Virtual or not, no party is complete without music. You can create an upbeat and festive playlist. The whole team can join in on the fun by adding songs to a playlist on a platform like [Spotify](#) or [Pandora](#) or have a karaoke by streaming lyric videos on [YouTube](#) with a program like [Watch2Gether](#). You could also have fun with “Name that Tune”.

## 3. Virtual Holiday Party (Fully Hosted!) 🎅

There are opportunities to have someone else do the work. A 90-minute event hosted over Zoom or other virtual platforms, which includes fun holiday themed games and activities (learn more about [virtual holiday parties by teambuilding.com](#)).

## 4. Trivia

Trivia is a great option for any virtual party or online meeting. Participants can answer using the chat or poll features, or audibly via webcam. You could also incorporate the raise hand reaction as a makeshift buzzer. There are endless opportunities to the type of questions you can ask.

## 5. Holiday Icebreakers

By splitting the group into breakout rooms for activities and small group interactions you have the flexibility of people being able to engage in conversations. Here are some holiday icebreakers to get started with:

- What is the strangest gift you ever received?
- What is your favorite holiday food?
- What is your favorite holiday movie?
- Does your family practice any interesting traditions?

You could even designate separate breakout rooms for various holiday activities such as singing, drink recipes, cookie decorating, gift wrapping, table scaping, and so much more.

## 6. Craft Festive Ornaments

Though you and your remote colleagues may not share an office Christmas tree, you can craft team ornaments that lend a sense of continuity to your individual trees. Ornament-making is a fun holiday activity that can easily carry over to virtual Christmas parties. While on the call, the gang can design and decorate ornaments together by following a lesson video, such as this [YouTube tutorial](#).

Another fun idea is to send your team ornament kits in the mail before the party. You may choose to print the company logo on a plain plastic sphere or a plain white ceramic tile, and then ask the team to personalize the decorations with markers, glitter, and other holiday ephemera.

After the party you can display the finished products in an online gallery or could even share the results on social media.

## 7. Holiday Newsletter (Collaborative)

This a great idea to celebrate successes, have employees get to know each other better and share company information, etc. Have people submit:

- What was your proudest work accomplishment this year?
- What is one personal achievement you reached this year?
- Did you welcome a new pet into your home?
- What was the best lesson you learned this year?
- What are you most excited about for next year?

Once you collect all submissions, you can display results as bullet points or highlights, with graphs, pie charts or photos.

## 8. Virtual Holiday Team Building Games

Party games can elevate any affair; virtual soirees included. There are a variety of virtual games you can play including:

- Charades: Act out titles of books, movies, people, etc.
- Pictionary: Use the screen-share and the whiteboard feature. People are given a word and the teammates will have sixty seconds to draw the word while other guests guess.
- Holiday Bingo: Online Holiday Bingo is a fun and familiar game you can play at your virtual holiday party. You can play a focused version of the game by allowing teammates to interact on chat and in breakout rooms, or you can play as a group throughout the party or over a longer period of time. You get to fill the spaces with seasonal ideas, employee information, etc. Of course, the first player to mark five squares in a row wins. Then you can decide if there are prizes or bragging rights.

## 9. Team Holiday Dinner

Food is an important element of any gathering. The easiest way to provide food for a virtual Christmas party is to reimburse employees for a treat or meal or send credits for a food delivery service like DoorDash or GrubHub. You could also order from a meal delivery kit from HelloFresh or BlueApron or send a box of assorted goodies from Cratejoy.

## 10. A Cocoa Break

To honor the season, your virtual coffee break can turn into a virtual cocoa break. Hot chocolate is delicious and easy to send; a packet of cocoa can fit into a standard mailing envelope (just be sure there is enough postage). If you really want to treat your staff, then you can send fixings like fancy marshmallows, cookies, chocolate shavings, cinnamon, or you can invite your colleagues to add whipped cream or coffee liqueur.

## 11. A Slideshow

Chances are good your employees have years-worth of holiday photos on their cell phones, thumb-drives, hard drives, social media profiles, and of course photo albums. Before your party, ask the staff to send you photos and video clips. Then, you can compile the submissions into a slideshow or video and share your screen so that the group can view the finished product together. Then add some music in the background.

**Bonus:** You could even turn the activity into a guessing game by challenging guests to name the employee in each photo.

## 12. Holiday Cookbook

The holidays often involve a lot of cooking. Swapping recipes allows your team to add a new surprise among the traditional family fare. You can edit together a team holiday cookbook or recipe guide full of delectables. You could organize the submittals based on category, such as hors d'oeuvres, breakfast, dinners, beverages, and desserts.

## 13. Charity Donations

The holidays are about giving back to our communities. By donating to charity during your holiday party, you and your team practice gratitude and generosity. Your teams can volunteer or gather items and make a donation.

No matter what you choose from ornament crafting, wreath making, festive team photos or holiday swag bags doing something together fosters teamwork, engagement, and fun. We hope you enjoy the holidays, and we offer you the best wishes for a Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Kwanzaa, and whatever other holiday event you may be celebrating!

## CLIENT ACCOLADES

Take a look at the lists below. The Portland Business Journal recently recognized Oregon employers and their Corporate Philanthropy activities. We are proud to associated with many of the organizations – we knew we kept good company.

### Corporate Philanthropy Awards, Small

Elliot Powell Baden & Baker, Inc  
Arnerich Massena Inc  
Stewart Sokol & Larkin LLC  
GISI Marketing Group

### Corporate Philanthropy Awards, Large

Advantis Credit Union

### Corporate Philanthropy Awards, Enterprise

PacificSource Health Plans

### Corporate Philanthropy Awards, Medium

The Partners Group  
O'Brien & Company LLC  
Tonkon Torp LLP

**epb&b stands for Elliott Powell Baden & Baker**, an insurance agency that consistently provides great service to its clients. Annually, they kick-off the holiday season with an outstanding holiday event. As you might imagine, they had to make some changes for this year. One of the niftiest things they do is select one or more charities to receive the funds raised by a silent auction. We can't wait for that to come back next year (fingers crossed). This year they are promoting two charities and asking that companies contribute directly to them: [Feed the Hungry](#) and [The Pongo Fund](#). We congratulate the giving spirit that epb&b has shown over these past 15+ years.

Information and advice offered through **Advantage** should not be construed as legal opinion. The material contained herein will not apply to all circumstances or to all organizations. Use it as a resource and reference. Should you feel legal advice is required, please consult with your corporate counsel.



## ON MY SOAPBOX

One of the things I like best about the internet is that you can find things that you weren't looking for, but they enrich your life. I like reading a lot, and I have a very eclectic set of interests. That means that I bump into materials that are not always HR oriented. This Soapbox is a perfect example of that. I was doing emails last month (which is always an invitation to run head long into a rabbit hole) when I found this.

*Kenyan runner Abel Mutai was just a few feet from the finish line, but became confused with the signage and stopped, thinking he had completed the race. A Spanish runner, Ivan Fernandez, was right behind him and, realizing what was happening, started shouting at the Kenyan to continue running. Mutai didn't know Spanish and didn't understand. Realizing what was taking place, Fernandez pushed Mutai to victory.*

*A journalist asked Ivan, "Why did you do that?" Ivan replied, "My dream is that someday we can have a kind of community life where we push and help each other to win."*

*The journalist insisted "But why did you let the Kenyan win?" Ivan replied, "I didn't let him win, he was going to win. The race was his." The journalist insisted, and again asked, "But you could have won!" Ivan looked at him and replied, "But what would be the merit of my victory? What would be the honor in that medal? What would my Mother think of that?"*

*Values are passed on from generation to generation.*

*What values are we teaching our children?*

*Let us not teach our kids the wrong ways and means to WIN.*

*Instead, let us pass on the beauty and humanity of a helping hand. Because honesty and ethics are the most important items to assist us in truly WINNING!*

*Post by Jim Steadman*

Jim, wherever you are, thanks so much for the short, but powerful, lesson. As we exit (hopefully) from the election season, let us demonstrate our best selves and "win" with integrity. As the election results clearly show, we are a divided nation, but that doesn't mean that we should rejoice that 50% of us lost. Whether our candidate won or lost, the results were extremely close. I urge all of us to be kind to one another and take the lesson of Abel Mutai to heart. As we approach the holiday season, we all could use a bit of kindness. The best way to get that is to show that kindness to others.

Wishing all of you a blessed Thanksgiving. Here's hoping that along with turkey, ham, or whatever your custom is, that you receive the gift of kindness and that you show it to others.

*Judy Clark, Founder*



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