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CORPORATE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL

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Having a Field Day

Teambuilding Trends That Boost Workplace Performance **PAGE 22**



Switch employees engaged in teambuilding during their annual Field Day.



Photo courtesy of Bobbi in Charlotte, NC

Perspective

By Arthur Backal

My Top 10 Holiday Party Planning Tips

Apella at Alexandria Center is an innovative meeting and event space in New York City that offers 10 impressive private rooms with unprecedented contemporary interiors and sweeping views of the East River. With this venue in mind, I have compiled my top 10 ways to plan a successful holiday party.

- 1. Plan ahead and book early.** There are only so many days between Thanksgiving and Christmas, and prime dates at great venues book up fast as many organizations often book one year in advance.
- 2. Consider Mondays and Tuesdays.** Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays are the most popular evenings for holiday parties. If you're looking to cut down on costs, ask if discounts apply for holiday parties on weekdays.
- 3. Great atmosphere.** Creating a mood that wows doesn't need to cost a great deal of money. Consult with your venue for help. Look for a venue with special, built-in features such as those found at Apella, including sophisticated lounge furniture, a built-in sound system, existing projection screens, custom lighting on the bars and gorgeous views — all of which create a beautiful and special atmosphere for an event.
- 4. Delicious food.** A memorable party always includes great food whether the holiday celebration is an intimate cocktail party or an exquisite dinner. Go first-class whenever possible. For example, Apella's exclusive caterer is Riverpark, a Tom Colicchio Restaurant.
- 5. Interactive dining.** Holiday parties are a great time for mingling and catching up. To make sure all your guests have the opportunity to network, consider coordinating seasonal, local and/or themed food and beverage pairing stations. Learning about



An impressive private dining room at Apella at Alexandria Center in New York City set for a holiday celebration.

Photo courtesy of Apella at Alexandria Center

- the food and wine you're consuming can be a great conversation starter!
- 6. Specialty cocktails.** Specialty cocktails are a great way to incorporate the festive spirit in a fun way. Make sure your venue has a mixologist who can assist in creating custom cocktails. White chocolate and candy cane martinis have been popular at Apella.
 - 7. Lighting.** Lighting is a relatively easy and cost-effective way to transform the look and feel of a room. Consider lighting in warm colors and/or projected graphic imagery like pine trees and snowflakes for your next holiday party.
 - 8. Be the disc jockey.** Music can make all the difference at a party! Many venues offer built-in sound systems and use Pandora or Spotify to easily arrange the perfect mix for the evening. This can offer considerable cost savings.
 - 9. Teambuilding.** A holiday party is the perfect time for teambuilding such as Build-a-Bike. Teams work together to build bicycles and then donate them to underprivileged children. Teambuilding exercises offer the perfect feel-good activity prior to imbibing at the after-party.
 - 10. Seasonal favors.** Offer guests warm apple cider or hot chocolate as they depart. Pair with sweet treats for a delicious note to leave on.

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Arthur Backal

is CEO and founder of Backal Management Group, which brings exceptional event management services to Apella. With more than 20 years of experience in the event and hospitality industry, Backal is the new senior advisor and investor in Union Square Events (USE), the events business of Danny Meyer's restaurant family Union Square Hospitality Group. Backal has worked with some of New York's most renowned hotels and venues, including The Pierre, The Plaza, The Waldorf-Astoria and The Rainbow Room. Since 2003, Backal has served as the consulting director of catering for the Mandarin Oriental, New York. www.backalgroup.com