

Companies think outside box for holiday parties

BY LYNN DUCEY

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The state's economy may not be booming heading into the new year, but Valley businesses are trying to boost employee morale with an assortment of festive parties, taking a step beyond the stan-



dard office potluck.

Employees of Scottsdale-based National Laser Institute and their spouses and friends will be gathering Dec. 17 at the home of CEO Louis Silberman in the McDowell Mountain Ranch area for a fun and silly time.

"We don't want anyone sitting down," Silberman said. "We have no tables; we want to force people to mingle."

He's recruited an employee who is a former DJ to play music, and the party will include a cupcake station along with other booths.

"We have a booth called Heat Me

Up that will feature hot chocolate and coffees with Bailey's (and) Kahlua," he said. "We have a magician that is going to run around and do the hat-and-rabbit tricks. We also have a car service, just in case. This lets people be able to let loose, but we want to be safe, too."

Silberman said the party will cost about \$4,000, but it's money well-spent as it offers a chance for employees to blow off steam and build camaraderie.

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PARTIES: Companies say celebrations critical to morale

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A survey by CareerBuilder shows 58 percent of employers are planning holiday parties for their employees this year. That's up from 52 percent in 2010.

The national survey was conducted online last summer by Harris Interactive on behalf of CareerBuilder. It included 2,696 hiring managers and human resource professionals, and 4,086 workers ages 18 and older.

"Holiday season is, of course, a time to celebrate with friends and family; but for many, it's also an opportunity to reflect on professional accomplishments and look forward to the next," said Ryan Hunt, a CareerBuilder career adviser.

Those results were mirrored in another survey of 100 HR professionals conducted last month by Challenger, Gray and Christmas Inc., which found 70 percent of companies will host a holiday office party.

While the survey didn't reveal an average dollar amount for the soirees, 95 percent of the companies surveyed planned to spend about the same as last year on their holiday parties, while roughly 3 percent will spend more.

"The fact that more companies this year than last year are able to share their successes with their employees — their most important asset — is a positive sign," Hunt said.

Rapper Young MC was the featured entertainer at Rose Law Group's holiday party Dec. 2 at the Coach House in Scottsdale. More than 300 people attended the bash, which also included gourmet burgers cooked by celebrity chef and restaurateur Eddie Matney and his staff, along with an open bar.

Founder Jordan Rose said her firm helped save the neighborhood bar from destruction in the early 2000s, giving the two businesses a historical connection. She declined to discuss how much the firm spends on its annual party.

Go Daddy Group Inc. CEO Bob Parsons throws over-the-top office parties. He booked Chase Field in downtown Phoenix last year and again this year for employees, spouses and clients of the Scottsdale-based Internet domain-name registrar to celebrate.

Jewel was among the entertainers at last year's bash, and Parsons handed out \$1 million in bonuses and prizes to



PROVIDED BY GO DADDY GROUP INC.

Go Daddy Group Inc. CEO Bob Parsons held the company's holiday party, which featured a performance by Jewel, at Chase Field last year.

his workers.

About 5,000 people are expected to attend this year's Go Daddy holiday party on Dec. 10, which also will feature food, games and top-name entertainment.

In contrast to such blowouts, HMA Public Relations is hosting a gathering for a dozen or so people at the Lucky Strike bowling alley at downtown Phoenix's CityScape on Dec. 15. The party will cost about \$600.

"From a business owner's perspective, this is a small price to pay for the camaraderie, morale and time to spend with each other," said HMA Vice President and General Manager Abbie Fink.

At least one Valley business has scheduled its office party for the new year. Scutari and Cieslak Public Relations is holding an office party for 150 invited guests and clients Jan. 5.

Co-founder Dave Cieslak declined to disclose a dollar figure for the event.

"This is the 'post-holiday' holiday party. There's so much going on in December, there's so many parties, whether it's business or personal. So, we wanted to have a little kick-off-the-new-year type of celebration," Cieslak said.

Connect with **Lynn Ducey** at lducey@bizjournals.com or on Twitter at @PHXBizLynn.