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From the San Francisco Business Times:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/news/2018/10/31/corporate-holiday-parties-bay-area-venues.html>

From fake snow to hip-hop dancers, Bay Area corporate holiday parties get creative

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Got a corporate holiday party that feels too, well, corporate? Sounds like the Grinch just paid your party a visit.

Rather than setting the focus on the food, party planners say it's the activities, entertainment and theme that sets apart a great holiday party from the rest.

"Typically, people don't remember the food or drinks six months after the party. But they usually remember the activities and entertainment," said Natasha Miller, owner and CEO of San Francisco-based event planner Entire Productions.

Themes are also crucial. Google had a jungle theme for its party last year, while Yelp had an apres ski holiday party with surprise hip-hop dancers dressed like lumberjacks, Miller recalled.

"Tech has the coolest parties and are the most wildest and fun," Miller said. "They have the budget and are pleasing a younger demographic of employees. Also, because engineers tend to be shy, they have to be creative and fun to draw people out."

Check out the slideshow above for a taste of Bay Area holiday parties.

Attention grabbing activities

San Francisco-based architectural firm Field Paoli Architects turned their 2017 holiday party at the Westin St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco into a surprise murder mystery scene, turning all of the 48 employees at the party into instant detectives or suspects.

"At the end of the cocktails, while people were standing around, the door to the room closed and THEY Improv came in and announced, 'there has been a murder,'" recalled Maureen O'Neil, principal and business manager at Field Paoli Architects.

O'Neil was one of seven members on the company's holiday party planning committee, all of whom served as suspects in the murder, which the remaining employees had to solve. The murder mystery, which unfolded over dinner and dessert, took 90 minutes to play and cost the firm \$3,000 to hire the improv company, O'Neil said.

Other Bay Area companies offer more family-friendly fare. Cupertino Electric turns a large grassy area outside of its San Jose headquarters into a winter wonderland for its holiday party. The electrical construction company hired Glacier Ice to grind ice and blow it onto the grassy area bordered by hay bales, said Autumn Casadonte, director of corporate communications for Cupertino Electric.

"The party is a hit with both parents and kids alike. The feedback to date has been extremely positive," Casadonte said. "Happy kids make happy parents who make happy employees."



FIELD PAOLI ARCHITECTS

Cupertino Electric holds its holiday party on the weekend so as many of its 1,500 Bay Area office and field workers are able to make the event. The cost to bring in several tons of snow runs between \$4,000 to \$5,000, she noted.

Sizing up venue and theme

Ease of access is critical when selecting a venue, Miller said.

“It may blow your mind architecturally, but it is more important that it is easy to get to,” Miller advised.

Bland venues can be dressed up with props and lighting for themed events. Twenty to 25 percent of Miller’s clients hold themed holiday parties.

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San Francisco Business Times

