



Why You Should Never Miss a Company Holiday Party or Invitation to Your Boss's Home

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

A few years ago, I spoke with a man (now retired) who had worked in a large corporation for forty years and in his last twenty years, he basically did nothing. He was paid very well and was more or less forgotten—doing very little of anything. He would show up at the office at 9:00 a.m. each day, try to look busy—do a task now and then—and then get in his car at 5:30 p.m. each evening and drive home. When he finally retired from the company, he felt as if he had achieved a great victory. For the past twenty years, his friend (who had risen very high in the company) had protected the man and made sure he kept his job—despite the fact that the guy was doing next to nothing and was of very little use to the company whatsoever.

This story may sound a little odd, but in virtually every company, there are people working in jobs who are not needed. There are people working in jobs where they may be grossly overpaid. There are people who are not carrying their weight. There are people who simply have very little utility to the company at all but, for whatever reason, are kept in the jobs they are in due to some connection, emotional attachment, or other safety net they have created.

Hiring, interviewing, continued employment, and your entire career are largely emotional areas. Most people believe that hiring and the **job market** are "professional" and "rational"—I believe nothing could be further from the truth. Probably 50% of the people in any company do not belong there, the company could do without them, or the company could do their jobs cheaper with someone else. If this sounds a little offensive to you, then I apologize. What I want you to understand is the value of having emotional connections in your job. Without these emotional connections, you will be much worse off than with them.

In one law firm I worked at, I remember an entire group of attorneys were kicked out of a block of hotel rooms because one of the attorneys had thrown a woman he had met out of his room naked and proceeded to call her a bunch of names. Incredibly, this guy was not fired, nor was he even disciplined by the firm. He was friends with several attorneys and no one really seemed to care. If the relationship had been "professional," he would have gotten in a lot of trouble. I saw other attorneys fired or asked to leave the same firm for much more minor offenses. However, when an attorney like this is fired, he or she generally does not have an emotional connection to the firm.

In every industry I am aware of, when layoffs occur and when people are fired, generally the first to go are those who do not have an emotional connection to the organization. If that is you, you are making a huge mistake. Regardless of how professional you are, the odds are that you are setting yourself up for problems later on.

Holiday parties are a perfect example. An invitation to an event at your boss's house is another. I used to be uncomfortable with these sorts of things—in fact, I often dreaded them because I felt instinctively they were so important and did not want to screw up. Nevertheless, I always went and am glad I did—the relationships I made were very beneficial to me.

The holiday party, invitations to spend time with your boss outside of work, and other similar occasions are extremely important because they are a chance to form an emotional connection with the people you are working with. This connection is arguably more important than the professional connection. The emotional connection will take you farther and will last longer than any other sort of connection. Avoid holiday parties and other occasions to form emotional connections with your coworkers and superiors at your own risk.

Most hiring is motivated by some sort of emotional need on the employer's part. When you go to interview at any job, the most important thing you can do is find out why the employer really wants to hire you. You may get some sense of this in the advertisement you respond to—or from your recruiter—but you are only going to truly understand why the employer wants to hire you when you get into the interview and are able to feel comfortable with the interviewer—and uncover the employer's emotional reasons for wanting to hire you.

Most people go into interviews concerned mainly about themselves.

- They worry about their appearance.
- They worry about how they will describe past jobs and moves.
- They worry about their experience.
- They may worry about their education.

All of these are valid worries (and may be important to the employer) but none of them are as important as the emotional motivation behind the employer's hiring you.

Emotion is often irrational, and employers often hire people for irrational reasons. In fact, our entire economy runs on irrationality. This may seem like a bold statement, but look at it this way:

In virtually every news story I have read about when unemployment is high, something is always mentioned about how companies and other organizations are "doing more with fewer people." Many of the stories mention things like companies doing just as much business (yet being more profitable) with 25% of the workforce.

More recently, news stories have mentioned "record corporate profits" because companies have staffed down and are doing the same amount of work with fewer employees in response to recessionary conditions.

This indicates to me that something else is going on when employers are in hiring mode. A rational and unemotional organization would only hire as many people as it needs to do the work. It would not hire more people than it needs to do the work—and it certainly would not hire four times as many people as it needs to do the work.

There is, of course, the need for extra employees in case someone leaves. There is the need to make sure people are not overworked. But there is absolutely no reason for any company to have four times as many employees as it needs to do the

work. (Forget about four times as many employees ... there is no reason to have 25% more employees than is needed to do the work.)

Overstaffing is a complete waste of any organization's money and resources. If this is the case, what is going on?

- In good economic climates, companies may be enthusiastic about the future and therefore want to hire more people—this is emotional.
- In good economic climates, more work that might not even be necessary is allowed to be done—this is emotional.
- In good economic climates, companies may want to see their offices and factories full of people—this is emotional.
- In good economic climates, friends and relatives of people are hired more readily—this is emotional.
- In good economic climates, people who are not productive are kept around—this is emotional.

Hiring becomes more of an emotional function for many employers than a rational and business-oriented function.

For a few years, in my own company, we had a man who was consistently working massive amounts of overtime. It got to be so that his overtime was so excessive, I spoke with his supervisor and told him that overtime had to stop. Then I spoke with his supervisor again. Then I spoke with him again. Then I spoke with him again. This went on for more than a year. Finally, I told the supervisor that if the overtime did not stop, I would fire the guy working overtime.

To my astonishment, the supervisor said: "Boss, he has three kids to feed and a house. You need to let him work overtime."

The supervisor was telling me, essentially, that his *emotional* connection to the employee overrode the company's more pragmatic and business-oriented reasons (saving costs) for limiting his hours.

I could list countless examples of these sorts of emotional connections and how they come into play in the workplace. There are so many emotional connections that virtually every company is far more inefficient than it should be.

If you are smart, you should realize that these emotional connections and emotional alliances are almost as important as your professional performance at work. These emotional connections are important in your getting and keeping a job and just about everything you do in your professional life.

Make the most of your emotional connection and realize that emotion is the dominant force in most professional settings.

Read More About Always Try and Accept Invitations to Spend Time Outside of Work With Colleagues:

- [You Need to be Connected With Others at Work](#)
- [Relationships, Commodities and Making Connections](#)
- [Take Small Actions and Meet Others](#)
- [The Importance of Fitting In](#)

<https://www.harrisonbarnes.com/>