

# The company picnic

## Steps to make sure you save your career — and maybe even thrive — during this annual event



**MY VOICE**  
Kit Prendergast

AAhhh, it's summer and the living is easy. Long days with light thoughts. Not a worry in sight ... But wait, here's the company picnic on my calendar! I had forgotten all about this annual "must be seen at" event that is important (or is it?) to my economic future. Questions instantly crowd my mind . . .

Do I dare wear a bathing suit in front of my work colleagues?

How do I bribe my teens (and my introverted spouse) to go?

How can I remember all those names? And who is married to whom?

Can I really eat those ribs without wearing them?

Will I embarrass my kids again in the hula hoop contest?

Should I let my boss win at a game of horseshoes?

Will they send the patrol boat out again when I have the paddleboat doing circles out in the middle of the lake?

So with a deep breath, I tell myself that attending company events like this is actually very good for my career. I remind myself that someone has put a lot of effort into planning this event and they actually do want me to come with my entire family in tow. After all, what's the worst that can happen? Now, that's a scary thought! But I cast those doubts aside and replace them with a "let's just go have fun" attitude. To bolster my resolve even further, I make the following pledge to myself:

"I will put forth my greatest effort to avoid these stubbed toes at The Company Picnic:"

- Eat too much and then settle in for a long summer's nap in my beach chair.
- Forget to lock the porta potty door which is next to the volleyball game.
- Expound on my leadership management theory to the CEO.

- Tell the CFO that I bounced a check — again.

- Comment on any child's unruly behavior — they are all cute and darling.

- Hide under the beach towel to avoid getting my picture taken for the company newsletter.

- Act Old and Sound Old by firmly stating I won't learn the latest software system because I've already learned three others.

Instead, I'm going to approach The Company Picnic like a scavenger hunt. I'm going to seek out seven hidden treasures on that beach. I'm going to seek and find the following:

- A great new Mexican restaurant recommendation.
- Someone who knows someone who knows someone who has a lead on a villa in the South of France available for a ridiculously low rent next summer (maybe a pool boy is included?).
- A summer job for my 17-year-old son who just hasn't gotten around to looking quite yet.

- Three book titles for "you-really-must-read-this-summer" books.

- A doggie person who knows the best places to let your dog swim at Lake Tahoe without being caught and fined.

- Someone who is doing work that I've always dreamed of doing, someone I can ask: How did you do that? Do you want to have coffee?

- Best retirement places that are next to the ocean and the mountains.

And maybe, just maybe, I'll find my new "best friend." After all, that is exactly what happened 17 years ago on a backyard porch in Alexandria, Virginia. You never know what treasures you may find at The Company Picnic. Go and enjoy!

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