

# Epic Christmas: How Small Businesses Do It?



We're only one week away from Christmas and as a startup we're rightfully excited about spending the Holidays as a team for the first time. Who knows, maybe in the coming years we'll become as impressed as Grinch, but for now we're enjoying every song on our hour's long jingly playlist.

This whole Christmas mood made us reach out to other small companies and ask them how they're celebrating the birth of Jesus. You'd be surprised to learn that most of them have ditched the old office Christmas party concept and have gone for more fun and bonding team building activities for small business.

## Decking the Virtual Halls

Hoxby is a global agency consisting of 1000 people working remotely in 30 countries. We don't have physical offices, we work virtually in Slack.

Each year we have a global Secret Santa and a remote UnBoxing Day - we use an app called Elfster to secretly assign our community someone to gift, then they post small presents to the recipients and the community gets together on a number of Zoom calls over the course of one day in December to 'unbox' online and share the experience virtually, Xmas jumpers, drinks and decorations are encouraged - last year there were dressed up pets and one of our community dressed up a miniature pony!

It's a really lovely way to make remote workers feel connected and one of the many ways Hoxby strives to create a happier and more fulfilled world of work.

**Firgas Esack, Publicist at Hoxby**

## **'Tis the Time to Be Generous**

At The Organisers, as an award winning concierge and lifestyle management company, we do a range of activities, some for charity and some for ourselves as follows. We like to do the kind of things that many of our clients enjoy throughout the year as our special reward for looking after them so well:

1. Each staff member is given an amount of money to donate to the section of our corporate charity, BUY1GIVE1. So they choose to give to different sectors where the international charity has projects such as Education, Women's Support, Health, Water Projects, Shelter and so on.
2. The Organisers provide services to our clients throughout the Christmas period, so we have a tea party with champagne and gifting our Secret Santa gifts to one another on Christmas Eve.
3. We enjoy an evening out ourselves too, doing the kind of things that our clients might do to see how it feels! This year we are going to Dirty Martini for Cocktails. Then Mac and Wild in the City to imagine we are in the Highlands and Islands eating fabulous wild Christmas fayre and wines. To finish off the evening we are going to our Hunting Lodge at Smoky Barrels, where we will dress up in tweeds and have a virtual shooting competition – all tech of course! Then a wee dram of whiskey and smores around a fire – can't wait!!

**Katie Shapley, Managing Director at The Organisers**

## **Jingle the Bells Hard and Loud**

I try to give them something cultural they wouldn't otherwise experience. So last year it was Handel's Messiah at the Albert Hall.

And by following the rule of always doing something unusual and trying at the same time to teach new things whilst celebrating Christmas with my employees these are some of the things we've done:

- Ice skating - Scotland
- Aida opera - Albert Hall
- Computer coding demo – office
- Rock climbing - Sussex
- Cirque du Soleil - Albert Hall
- Obstacle course - Kent
- Talk by a psychologist - at the office
- Sailing course – Isle of Wight
- How to be a copywriter talk – office
- Don Giovanni - English National Opera
- Driving racing cars - Brands Hatch
- Talk by a longevity expert – Cambridge

- Messiah - Albert Hall
- High speed driving – Mercedes Brooklands
- Stock market psychology talk – office
- Eritrean food – Harrow Road

There were more but these come readily to mind

**Duncan Collins, Founder of Runagood**

## **Escape the Ordinary**

I am a small business owner with a team of 8-10. I have just booked an escape room called The Million pound Heist. I think the escape the room enables them all to get involved whether they celebrate Christmas or not and it's also great for team bonding. Also, we are a smaller team and it allows everyone to contribute their different skill sets and feel special.

In the past we have done things like going to an adult ball pit - who wouldn't want to jump in a ball pit! Or have a round of mini golf.

I find that not many people enjoy a traditional office party and they feel awkward. Whereas with the Escape Room you'd be doing a task and working together in a fun environment which means you get rid of any of that awkwardness.

I would say doing things outside the norm, that's when you see the magic happen. It helps the team grow and bond together.

**Julianne Ponan, CEO of Creative Nature**

## **Cheers to a Merry Christmas**

We always go to a restaurant for our Christmas meal and a tradition started to drink Benedictine after the meal. As most restaurants don't sell it, we have to ask them in advance to get a bottle or two in.

The tradition started quite simply, by one of the staff noticing that the restaurant had a bottle of Benedictine behind the counter and ordering one. It was then offered to others, most of whom wanted to try it, and by the end of the night we'd emptied the bottle. The next year, when organising the meal, everyone remembered the Benedictine, so we made sure the restaurant had some in stock.

One year, I asked a friend to dress up as Santa Claus and come to the restaurant during the meal to give everyone gifts. This was mostly for the benefit of one employee, who loves everything about Christmas, but everyone enjoyed the surprise.

We don't always have our meal before Christmas. This time round it will be in January. One year, we had organised it for December but it snowed very heavily that day and nobody could get to the restaurant, so we re-arranged it for February. We still had Christmas crackers and, of course, Benedictine - it wouldn't be a company Christmas meal without Benedictine.

**Steven Tucker, Managing Director at The Payroll Site**