



7 STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL COMPANY PICNIC



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1. **Choose a Date**
2. **Determine Your Group Size and Plan Accordingly**
3. **Examine the Demographics of Your Group**
4. **Set a Budget**
5. **Organize Your Time**
6. **Choose a Location**
7. **Plan the Activities**

1. Choose a Date

Timing is everything! It is essential that you choose a date and time that will be convenient for everyone to attend. Be sure to check the company calendars — especially those of key executives and upper management. It is also important to be considerate of everyone's free time. Don't expect employees to give up half of their Saturday or Sunday. A three to four hour event is ample time to enjoy a meal together, mix and mingle, and join in some activities. Any time beyond that may be considered work rather than pleasure. In some cases, such as manufacturing, retail chains and other shift-style operations, a longer picnic may be necessary so everyone can participate.

It is also important to choose a month that works well for your company. Traditional "picnic season" is considered to be May–September, although many companies enjoy gathering during October for hayrides and bonfires. If you choose a weekend date, be sure to book early in order to secure a location and entertainment.

Setting a date first will ensure that you get the most desirable date and time for your company picnic. Some venues book picnics up to one year in advance. Once you learn what month works best for your group, it is a good idea to make it an annual picnic. Planning your picnic during the same month every year will create consistent attendance over time. This also allows your employees and their families to plan and look forward to it each year. Annual picnics also create a tighter group over time as people and their families meet again each year and catch up.

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2. Determine Your Group Size and Plan Accordingly

Picnics are often priced per person. Knowing your group size in advance will save you time because it eliminates the guesswork of choosing the venue size and pricing.

Estimate your group size by starting with the total number of employees and multiply that number by 1.5. So if you have 200 employees, a realistic estimate would be 300 total guests, with approximately 15–17% of that number being children between the ages of 3–9. Children ages 10 and up are typically considered adults when planning for food counts. Children 2 and under are generally free of charge at most places, but knowing that number is important for all other accommodations. Generally, the number of children ages 2 and under is around 5% of the number of employees. Some “tweens” can eat as much or more than adults, so they are typically considered adults when ordering and planning food count.

Knowing your group size will also determine the amount of space, food and activities that you will need to reserve for your picnic.

When considering different facilities and their sizes, you should find out what sort of accommodations they have for your specific group size. Don't forget to consider parking. Once again, knowing that number before you start researching sites will save you time.

3. Examine the Demographics of Your Group

Figuring out who is coming to the event helps you choose the types of entertainment and food items that will be enjoyed most. What type of guests will attend the event — young children, teens, adults, grandparents?

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For company picnics with a lot of young children, it is important to incorporate things that they will like, such as games, inflatables, hands-on activities, etc. The more entertained the kids are, the happier the parents will be.

Don't forget the tweens! It is important to provide activities specifically for that age group. People often assume they will enjoy the same activities as the young children, when in fact some amenities have weight limits or may be considered too childish by a tween. Consider karaoke, sports equipment or mechanical rides to appeal to them.

Keep in mind that not every employee has children, so consider interactive activities for adults too. Typically, some sort of musical entertainment paired with beverages and lawn games can be very enjoyable for adults without children.

As for older guests, it is important to provide them with a comfortable setting. If you are having your event during the summer, make sure that the site has shade or air conditioning available. It is important to choose a facility that can accommodate all of your needs.

4. Set a Budget

Decide on your budget at the beginning. Be realistic. How much do you think it will cost to take a large group of, say, 200 people out to dinner and a show, or to a tailgate and ball game?

First of all, be sure to take advantage of the fact that, unlike most business-related meals (which are only 50% tax deductible), costs for food, beverages and entertainment for a company-wide picnic are fully deductible.

It is also important to talk to your company's vendors. Many vendors will be more than happy to sponsor part of your event. Vendors can be recognized with "sponsored by" signs placed in front or near the

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attraction they have sponsored. This is a great way for everyone involved in your company's growth to share some time together.

You can also save money by utilizing the experience of event planners. Event planners are usually well-established with DJs, caterers and entertainers, and will be able to handle all of the negotiations for you. Knowing your budget in advance will eliminate a lot of guesswork when you start calling around for pricing.

5. Organize Your Time

Just because you are the "chosen one" as far as picnic planning is concerned, doesn't mean you can't form committees to share the workload. Recruit a committee if necessary for each major component including site selection, food and entertainment. Send a memo to all employees asking for volunteers. This will allow you to supervise rather than getting lost in the details.

You can also save yourself a lot of time, hassle and money by utilizing a site that has an event planner. Their attention to detail, creativity and references can be extremely useful. Most event planners have proven performance and are calm under pressure. You can give them the details and let them plan the event for you. Also, don't be afraid to ask questions. Be sure to ask how many events they have produced, what kind and for how many guests.

However, even with the help of others, it is still important for you to stay organized. You can do this easily by keeping a loose-leaf notebook that contains all of the contracts, menus, invitations, schedules and any other significant decisions and resources. Having everything in one place will save you time and stress when you have to answer questions. It will also give you an overview of the planning and provide valuable information to the person who handles the job next year.

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6. Choose a Location

You're in luck! The Kansas City area has a wide variety of venue styles for you to choose from for your company picnic. But how to pick one? First, you must ask yourself a few questions. When you envision your employees getting together, what do you see? Is it renting a shelter at a park and having a potluck? Is it tailgating at a sporting event and then watching the game together? Or maybe it's an outdoor venue with volleyball, horseshoes, fishing, and lots of BBQ?

You also must ask yourself if you want to find a location that becomes a yearly tradition or if you plan on switching up the venue each year. If you choose to find a location where you can return for your picnic each year, you will find that there are many benefits since you won't have to recreate the wheel each year come picnic time. Company gatherings are a lot of work to begin with, so there's no need to add more! That's why it might be a good idea to seek out a space where you can envision your group there long-term. Then each year you just have to pull out the file, review the package, and you're done! Plus, you can easily change out or add in a few new surprises each year to keep the party feeling fresh. This kind of picnic style lends itself to more traditional companies with deep-rooted values of employee appreciation.

Once you determine your picnic style based on the questions above, you will be able to narrow down your venues much easier. Once you have selected a few locations, schedule visits to each venue. Meet with who you will be working with to discuss what they offer. Be sure to ask things like if they provide catering or if they will be able to find a good caterer for you. The same goes for food, entertainment, and activities. It's also important to ask whether or not set-up and clean-up is provided as part of the contract for your event. After you have visited your venues and asked these important questions, sit down and compare all of your options. Find the one that best fits your company and your planning needs.

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7. Plan the Activities

Creating a fun atmosphere during a company picnic is key! Thankfully, it can be achieved by using a few key party planning elements. The first way to get the party going, good music! Nothing sets the tone like having fun tunes playing when your guests arrive. This can range from light background music to a live performance such as a band or singer. Choose your tunes wisely, or better yet, find a pro to take care of them for you. Hiring a DJ is always an excellent idea. Not only do they have every song imaginable available, but they are also trained to feel out a crowd. They will know just when to pump it up to get things moving and are great at keeping a picnic flowing.

Once your guests arrive, there is one thing that they will almost certainly want to do — EAT! After all, it wouldn't be a picnic without good food. Don't make your guests hold out for long either. Most will be counting on the picnic for their lunch or dinner, so serve the food towards the beginning of the event. Have a wide variety of options available. Don't forget to include at least one vegetarian option and options for kids if your event is family-friendly.

Last but not least, there are the activities! Ask yourself what kinds of activities your employees would like to do. Does your company have a fun, competitive side? Maybe some tug-of-war or company trivia is in order! Will there be lots of kids and families attending? Games like balloon tosses, three-legged races, and dunk machines are perfect for them. Other sit-down games like Bingo are great as well since both young and old will be able to participate. And don't forget about the prizes! Having door-prizes or a raffle is a great way to get guests excited about the event and leave them with a feeling of appreciation. Make sure that you hold out until the end of the party though to give away the big prizes so that people will stick around.

By combining these three elements, your guests will have plenty to do and will be sure to have a memorable time at the company picnic.

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Now you know the seven most important things to consider before planning your company picnic. By knowing the best possible dates, your group size, who will be attending, your budget, how involved you want to be in the planning process, the location and activities, you will be able to get your company picnic plans off on the right foot.

These 7 Steps to a Successful Company Picnic are brought to you by your friends at Faulkner's Ranch, a turn-key event facility.

**Call and reserve your
company picnic today!**



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